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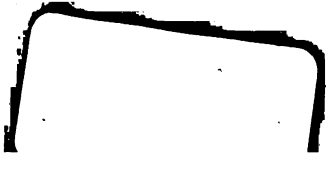

MARRYING OFF A DAUGHTER.

(MARIER SA FILLE.)

BY HENRY GRÉVILLE.

AUTHOR OF "SONIA," "SAVÉLI'S EXPIATION," "A FRIEND," "GABRIELLE; OR, THE HOUSE OF MAURÈZE."

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY MARY NEAL SHERWOOD.

"Marrying Off a Daughter" is gay, sparkling, and pervaded by a delicious tone of quiet humor, while the individuality of the characters is very marked. We have among them a Russian Countess, a Polish Colonel, and a gay young lover, who are admirably depicted. The lady travels all over Europe to find a desirable PARTI *for her pretty daughter, who has a tolerable dowry, but alas! husband after husband slips through the meshes of the net woven by the mother. The why, seems never to be understood by Madame La Comtesse, while shrewdly suspected by the daughter, who displays a singular mixture of girlish innocence and knowledge of the world. But it is not best to tell the whole story here: suffice it to say, that the book will be read and enjoyed by thousands. It has been admirably translated by Mrs. Sherwood, whose skilful hands have rendered it into English, pure and undefiled.*

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Marrying Off a Daughter. *By Henry Gréville,* author of "Sonia," "Savéli's Expiation," "Gabrielle," "A Friend," etc. *Translated by Mary Neal Sherwood.*

"MARRYING OFF A DAUGHTER" is gay, sparkling, and pervaded by a delicious tone of quiet humor, while the individuality of the characters is very marked. The mother travels all over Europe to find a desirable *parti* for her pretty daughter, who has a tolerable dowry, but alas! husband after husband slips through the meshes of the net woven by the mother. The why, seems never to be understood by Madame La Comtesse, while shrewdly suspected by the daughter, who displays a singular mixture of girlish innocence and knowledge of the world—born of the singular education which it has been her unhappy lot to receive. Then there is the gay young lover, but it is not best to tell the whole story here. Suffice it to say, that the book will be read and enjoyed by thousands, and we venture to predict for it a great success. It has been admirably translated by Mary Neal Sherwood, whose skilful hands have rendered it into English, pure and undefiled, as are all of her translations.

Sonia. A Russian Story. *By Henry Gréville,* author of "Savéli's Expiation," "Marrying Off a Daughter," "Gabrielle," etc. *Translated by Mary Neal Sherwood.*

Henry Gréville's great novel, "SONIA," is charming and refined, and is a powerful Russian story. The great value of this romance consists in the delicacy and originality with which the really beautiful character of the girl, "SONIA," is developed. "SONIA" is a graceful, domestic story, displaying the author's imaginative style and play of fancy, is careful in construction, and is charmingly and most beautifully told—giving one a very distinct idea of every-day home life in Russia. The translation is admirable, and no small portion of the enjoyment afforded by the book is due to the graceful, flowing, idiomatic English that Mrs. Sherwood has used in her version. No higher compliment can be paid such work than to say that while all the spirit and flavor of the French has been preserved, it does not read in the least like a translation.

Savéli's Expiation. *By Henry Gréville.* A dramatic and powerful novel of Russian despotism in the time of serfdom; combining in it a pure, pathetic and tender love story. *Translated from the French of Henry Gréville, by Mary Neal Sherwood.*

One of the most dramatic and most powerful novels, and the one that established Henry Gréville's fame in Europe, is "SAVÉLI'S EXPIATION," (*translated from the French, by Mary Neal Sherwood*), which is a faithful portrayal of Russian despotism in the time of serfdom, and although the character on which the plot rests is strongly drawn, if is not overdrawn, but is true to the times and situation. Powerful as it is, it is as free from exaggeration as if it were described from memory of an actual event, while a pathetic, tender love story is presented for relief. Henry Gréville's canvases are never crowded, though she is not what is called an emotional writer, yet there is an underlying tone of pathos in this novel which escapes at times in powerful passages, the interest being well sustained throughout, while the story is refined and exceedingly enjoyable.

Gabrielle; or, The House of Maureze. *Translated from the French of Henry Gréville,* the most popular writer in Europe at the present time.

"GABRIELLE; OR, THE HOUSE OF MAUREZE," is a very touching story, most skilfully told, and follows the life of a girl whose title it bears. At sixteen, when the story opens, she marries into the house of Maurèze, never having seen her husband until she meets him at the altar, which was the custom of the time of Louis the Fourteenth. Monsieur Maurèze was forty when his wife was sixteen. If we were to tell any more of the plot it would be to tell the story, so we advise all persons to get the book, and see for themselves how everything happened, and how excellently it is all told.

MARRYING OFF A DAUGHTER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE

FRENCH OF HENRY GRÉVILLE,

BY MARY NEAL SHERWOOD.

TELEGRAM:

To COLONEL MARIÉVITCH,

Hôtel de Bade, Paris.

"*Katia's marriage broken; funds exhausted. Send considerable sum at once.* "BARBE SLAVSKY."

WHEN the boy appeared with this despatch, the Colonel was still in bed, turning over in his active mind and fertile imagination the prospects of a new commercial enterprise. The sight of the blue envelope recalled him to the realities of life, while the perusal of its contents by no means elevated him to the seventh heaven.

"Katia's marriage broken off!" he grumbled, between his teeth. "Yes, I suppose so. And I am not astonished, particularly as it is by no means the first time that the same thing has happened. But a considerable sum—where the deuce does that dear Barbe suppose I can find a considerable sum?"

TRANSFER FROM C. A. JUN 1923

However, as absolute submission to that dear Barbe's wishes had become a fixed habit with the Colonel, he quickly arose, and, donning a dressing-gown, went to the dressing-table where lay his portemonnaie; opening it he murmured in a melancholy tone,

— "Seventeen francs and sixty-five centimes—this surely is not 'a considerable sum!'"

By way of a relief to his conscience—or possibly with a vague hope that some miracle had taken place in his favor —he opened a small Davenport which was packed with unreceipted bills, and examined one drawer after another with anxious diligence, and with the same negative result. Saddened, but not discouraged, the Colonel seated himself in a most commodious arm-chair, covered with that eternal red plush which is always to be seen in hotels.

"Where the deuce shall I turn, to unearth 'a considerable sum?'" repeated Boleslas Mariévitch, as he crossed one thin leg over the other.

With his elbow upon his knee, and his chin resting in the palm of his hand, he applied himself to a vigorous examination of all the nooks and corners of his memory, when suddenly he heard a gentle tap.

"Come in!" said the Colonel, turning his deep gray eyes, wherein was the light of a new-born hope, upon the door.

The hope disappeared on the appearance of the visitor, who presented himself with the timid air of an inferior overwhelmed with respect for his superior. Such a one of course could not bring "a considerable sum" to the Colonel.

"It is you then, Josia!" said Mariévitch, in a tone which was both sulky and protesting. "Look here, just see what Madame Slavsky has just sent me."

Josia took the telegram, read it with a despairing look, turned his eyes to the ceiling with a sigh, and letting the paper fall, turned his china blue eyes full of the most heartfelt commiseration on the Colonel.

"You do not happen to have a considerable sum, I suppose?" asked our hero, changing at the same time the position of his knees, but still resting his chin in the palm of his hand.

Joseph Milaredskévitch—more generally known to his friends as Josia—made a negative sign with as much energy as his natural gentleness of character permitted.

"But first," resumed the Colonel, "what does Madame Slavsky mean by a considerable sum?"

"A thousand francs, perhaps?" suggested Josia, timidly.

The Colonel shook his head slowly but decidedly. "No, a thousand francs would certainly not be a considerable sum to Madame Slavsky." Josia, humiliated by his want of success, hung his head like a lamb fresh from the hands of his shearer, and was silent.

"Two thousand francs are not enough," resumed the Colonel. "I ought to send three thousand at the very least. Do you think, Josia, that three thousand would be enough?"

"I should say, Colonel, that it would be sufficient—quite sufficient."

"Very well, then, that is one point settled. We will send three thousand francs."

With a serene brow, proud of having surmounted this first difficulty, the Colonel now rose, but after taking a step or two he suddenly stopped.

"The great difficulty," he said, slowly, "seems to be in finding this sum."

Josia looked crushed to the earth by his inability to contradict this statement.

"You have looked in the safe at the office? And what did you find there?"

"Nothing, Colonel," sighed the young secretary.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing, whatever. Do you not remember, sir, that the other Saturday when we went to the circus in the evening that you took whatever there was?"

"Ah!" said the Colonel, interrogating the ceiling with a frown, "I do seem to remember vaguely. How much was there then?"

"One hundred and twenty-seven francs and eight centimes," answered the faithful secretary.

"Indeed? well, we never expended all that! Josia!" cried the Colonel, with no little animation, "there must be something out of this sum remaining, and as my bill can run on at the hotel—"

"Here it is," replied Josia, piteously, pulling a paper from his pocket. "It was handed to me just now."

"Indeed!" said Mariévitch, calmly, not allowing himself to be disturbed by so trifling an incident. "That is easily put off for the present," and he waved away the bill. "But the question now before us is, where are the hundred and twenty-seven francs?"

Josia drew from yet another pocket a dainty Russian leather case, ornamented with his monogram in silver, presented by Madame Barbe Slavsky, and read the following items:

Carriage to circus	2
Two seats at circus, with fee to usher	5
Two bouquets for two ladies met at circus	40
Three carriages for friends of the Colonel	6
Supper at Peters' for six persons	91 75
Handed to Colonel on demand	40
Total	184 75

"One hundred and eighty-four francs and seventy-five centimes," said the Colonel, slowly; "and we had only one hundred and twenty-seven."

"I paid the balance, sir," stammered this faultless secretary, covered with noble confusion.

"I owe you therefore fifty-seven francs and seventy-five centimes; make a memorandum of it, and we will settle our accounts later."

Josia bowed profoundly. "The Colonel may feel assured of my entire devotion to his wishes," he began.

"All right, all right!" said Mariévitch, with a patronizing air, "I believe that you are really attached to me," and he gave a friendly tap to the shoulder of the young man, whose eyes filled with tears of pride and joy. The Colonel turned to his washstand; as he poured out the water he said to Josia: "Take a seat, my boy, and find out some way by which I can send the three thousand francs this very day to Madame Slavsky." While the

Colonel splashed and spattered and Josia's head ached with thinking, the clock, which wonderfully enough was correct, struck eleven.

"Eleven!" exclaimed Mariévitch, lifting his face from the basin with moustache and whiskers dripping like a Triton, "eleven o'clock! and I had a meeting at this hour with the stockholders. Run to the office, Josia, and say to these gentlemen, if by chance any should happen to be there, that the Colonel is ill and desires to be excused. Tell them that the accounts will be ready for their inspection next Thursday."

At this unexpected and joyous prospect, Josia was much dazzled. He turned with delight to the Colonel, whose face, however, had again disappeared within the huge basin.

In a half hour more Josia came back, all out of breath, and found the Colonel seated in front of a very pretty shaving-glass set in a silver frame, calmly combing his whiskers with a lead comb. The whiskers were superb—long, black, and silky, without a thread of white, so that the lead comb was a measure of precaution rather than of necessity. The Colonel was, in fact, still youthful in his appearance, although in a full light certain crow's feet suggested that he could not be far from fifty.

There is a great deal of truth in the old axiom, one is only as old as one looks; and the Colonel looked young.

Tall, slender and well made, there was but one fault to find with his appearance—he seemed to have swallowed a ramrod, and the thought involuntarily occurred to a stranger

that if a mischievous boy should suddenly withdraw the support that the Colonel would tumble flat upon the ground. But this chimerical terror was forgotten as one became better acquainted with this delightful Boleslas.

Life had gone sufficiently hard with him. He had the reputation of being the busiest man in the world. In his youth he had served in Russia; then his fortune—small at the best—had quickly disappeared in smoke, cigar smoke and the steam of hot punch, to say nothing of the sighs at the feet of pretty women. Polish by birth, a Romanist by religion, he had never been a great favorite in his regiment; he was charming, amiable and liberal, but there was something lacking—he never inspired confidence. What it was—whence lay the deficiency—it were difficult to say; his eyes never looked full and squarely into yours; his smile was not altogether sincere; at all events it were as impossible to define what was wanting, as to give the reasons for his selecting Paris as his place of residence.

He had lived in Paris twenty years, making repeated visits to Baden, to Hombourg and elsewhere, in those days when Roulette flourished, which since the war has been expelled from virtuous Germany.

Since this spasmodic attack of virtue the Colonel had been very much unsettled in the routine of his life. There were but two places remaining which in any way could minister to his strongest passion, and those were far off—Monaco and Saxon.

The glory of Monaco has been often sung; who will sing the praises of Saxon, now that Saxon is no more?

Saxon in its turn has been made virtuous. The railroad which once took a traveller there, wound through the valley of the Rhone, crept along the rocky sides of the Alps, under the spray of tinkling cascades. But this poor railroad now has no travellers, and its locomotives are useless and covered with rust. Who on earth would go to Saxon, now that gambling is abolished? Who would presume on the fourth page of the daily papers to talk of the curative powers of its waters? The only cure that was ever made there was the emaciation of the purse, and it often came to pass that the purse came out of the village leaner than it went in.

The Colonel loved Saxon—not for the picturesque wilderness in which it was entrenched, but for its Roulette, to say nothing of its Trente and Quarante. He loved Saxon because it was a retired spot, frequented only by enthusiasts, while at Monaco all Europe was encountered. The hotel waiters had seen every person who bore, had borne or will bear, a name of celebrity, go in and out of their doors. Now the Colonel was by no means fond of meeting acquaintances when he was about to offer up a sacrifice at the altar of fortune. He was tired of saying to the friends whom he met on the Boulevard between five and six, "I have run over from Nice." No, it was intensely disagreeable to stop—bow, smile and talk, just at the moment when his whole mind was centred on some new combination. Thus it was that he preferred Saxon, and gradually fell into the habit of going there quite often, passing quietly through Geneva without making his pres-

ence known there, and hastening on with all a gambler's eagerness.

On the day of which we write the Colonel had no thought of going to Saxon. In the first place he had not the requisite funds for the journey, and in addition he had not the time. When his secretary returned, he looked at him and said anxiously:

"Well! Josia, how about the meeting of the stockholders?"

"There was no one there, sir."

"Very good. Did you send a telegram to Madame Slavsky?"

"No, Colonel, no!" stammered the timid Josia.

"What negligence!"

"I did not send it, Colonel, because I did not know—"

"What to say, I suppose—and yet it was simple enough. Try in future, my friend, to take the initiative occasionally. In the initiative lies half of the great secret of success, the other half is in the hands of Providence. Take a pen—have you any telegraph blanks?"

"Oh, yes, any amount."

"Very well; write: *Madame Slavsky, Monaco.* No other address is necessary, for the employés in the telegraph office know her and her place of residence. Go on—"

"Yes—*Madame Slavsky, Monaco*—"

"Continue: *Amount asked will leave by mail to-night.*"

"To-night!" repeated Josia, fixing his troubled eyes on the Colonel. "But, sir, you have not got it yet."

"But we must get it, now that we have promised it by telegram; and then, of course, a lady must not be made to wait—and Madame Slavsky least of all. Write:

"Send details in regard to the broken engagement—very anxious. Business matters all right."

"Business matters all right!" repeated Josia, mechanically, and then, with his pen lifted from the paper, looked at the Colonel anxiously as he again repeated the words: "Business matters all right—"

The Colonel crossed his left leg over his right knee.

"It is never wise to make women anxious," he said, in a tone which, though sententious, was kindly. "If we were to say to this most excellent of women—Madame Slavsky—that our affairs are the reverse of right, we should give her great pain and should not be ourselves one whit better off. Make it a rule in life, Josia, to avoid all shocks, either giving or receiving them. But when they are inevitable, Josia, soften them as much as possible. Remember these rules, my boy, for they are full of wisdom. How many words have you, Josia?"

"Fourteen, sir—"

"And the signature? You must pay double rate then."

"But, Colonel, we can easily omit several words without weakening the point of the despatch."

"Petty economies, my friend! Such frivolous considerations weaken the faculties. Send the telegram just as it stands. There is some change on the chimney piece."

Josia, submissive as usual, took ten francs from the marble where the Colonel had placed all his present fortune, and went out.

On the stairs he met a young man of about thirty, with a bright, frank countenance, who seemed to enjoy life as much as do the first sparrows in spring.

"Ah! Ratier," cried Josia. "How thankful I am to see you! Have you any money?"

"Not a sou, Master Orange Peel. Have you?"

Josia, accustomed to this extraordinary name, shook his head mournfully.

"I am going to the telegraph office," he said, continuing on his way down the stairs. "I shall be back directly, and pray go up and see the Colonel."

"How much do you want?" asked Ratier, running after the haggard-eyed secretary.

"Three thousand francs," murmured the unfortunate youth.

Ratier whistled loudly and significantly.

"How soon?" he asked.

"At once."

Ratier's eyebrows went up and his eyes were full of mischievous raillery as he said:

"Upon my word! why don't you say you must have three millions before breakfast?"

"I would, if I thought there was any chance of getting them," sighed Josia, as he disappeared round the corner.

Ratier looked after him, shrugged his shoulders in a pitying sort of fashion as he murmured: "Poor boy, he will always be the same, which is perhaps as well, for he is a very perfect specimen of a very rare type among men."

Ratier rushed up the stairs and giving a hasty rap at the Colonel's door, opened it and went in without waiting for a reply.

"How thankful I am to see you!" cried Boleslas.

"That is precisely what your secretary said to me on the staircase. You should be more original in your phraseology. Well! what do you wish me to do for you?"

"My dear fellow, you must find me three thousand francs immediately—"

"By immediately, you mean—?"

"I mean before five o'clock."

Ratier sank into the plush arm-chair with a gasp.

"Josia said the same thing to me, but I could not believe him."

"But it is the simple truth nevertheless. Madame Slavsky has need at once of a considerable sum, and—"

"If it is for Madame Slavsky the matter assumes a totally different aspect," exclaimed Ratier, starting to his feet. "Her daughter is a raving beauty! What an abominable thing it is for her to marry that old imbecile, De ——."

"She is not going to marry ——," began the Colonel, biting his lip in vexation. Ratier left him no time to finish the sentence, but completed it to his own satisfaction.

"— Any imbecile," he cried.

"Not just at present—"

"Evohé! Bacchus is King!" sang the young man, throwing back his shoulders and letting out a magnificent

voice which made every glass ring in the room. Then, becoming very grave again, he put one hand in his vest-pocket and leaned against the chimney-piece in Chateaubriand's famous attitude.

"Well! well! and Mademoiselle Slavsky is not to be married after all! Her mother must be in a lovely frame of mind!"

"What do you mean?" asked the Colonel, half angrily, pulling his long silken whiskers as he spoke.

Ratier looked at him with a droll air of excessive deference.

"I have been led to believe," he answered gravely, "that to marry off a young girl is the most difficult task in the world. I have also been told that although Mademoiselle Slavsky is a most charming young person, that the task of finding a suitable husband is no easier in her case than in that of most other young girls, and I consequently infer that her mother having found a son-in-law to suit her—as must be the case, since she accepted him—will be by no means pleased to be compelled to seek another son-in-law equally desirable—"

Here the door opened and Josia's slender form appeared. Ratier interrupted himself to exclaim: "Well! Josia—Chevalier Orange Peel—have you sent off your despatch?"

"Yes," answered Josia. "And you two—have you settled where the money is coming from?"

"The money?" said Ratier, in a tone of haughty indifference, "no, we have not made up our minds, but then there is plenty of time for that. What o'clock is it?"

"Five minutes past one," answered the Colonel, drawing out his watch.

"What a superb watch!" cried Ratier; "is it gold?"

"I beg your pardon!" answered Boleslas, with some disdain.

"Very wise," said Ratier, nodding his head with an air of intense wisdom; "a man ought to have all his jewelry real, and everything about him, so far as is possible, silver and gold."

"Imitation jewelry or plate are simply ignominious," answered the Colonel, loftily.

"That is not my reason," continued Ratier, with more and more of concentrated wisdom in his tone.

"Why then?"

"Because they are worth more at a pawnbroker's."

The Colonel looked at his watch, restored it to his vest-pocket and continued to play with the chain with a very serious air.

"How much could you get on that watch?" said Ratier to the Colonel, in a low, confidential voice.

"On this watch?" answered Boleslas, in great amazement.

"Yes, including the chain?"

"But—"

"I wager that they would give you five hundred francs."

"Four hundred and fifty," said Josia, in his thin flute-like tones, to which the Colonel paid not the slightest attention.

"It is worth more than that," said Ratier, in a tone of

superiority. "Come, now, Colonel, to business! The mail closes at six—we have only about four hours and a half—little enough to win the Golden Fleece. And now for Bolivia."

"Bolivia?"

"Yes, my railroad, don't you remember? And such a railroad! Just picture it to yourself, Colonel. The road goes over fourteen cataracts, twenty-three rivers, through eleven primeval forests and three volcanoes in a constant state of eruption! Think of it!"

"But," objected Josia, timidly, "volcanoes might possibly interfere with the construction of the road."

"Yes, I have heard the same objection before," replied Ratier, gayly; "but we shall soon arrange all these matters. Just at present, however, it is true that the Bolivia securities are not looked upon very favorably at the Bourse."

"That is to say, they are utterly worthless," interposed the Colonel, elevating his black brows until they touched the roots of his black hair.

"Just as you please to call it," answered Ratier, looking out of the window, "they stand in the same category with the stock of the company for 'The Propagation and Protection of Mutton.'"

Boleslas colored and looked furiously angry for a moment, but suddenly remembered that he could not, just then, afford to quarrel with Ratier, who might be very useful to him in the present emergency.

"What do you intend to do with these Bolivia securi-

ties?" he asked, in a voice whose trembling he endeavored to control. "You can't sell them!"

"Of course I can't! I doubt if in the whole of Paris I could find to-day a man simple enough to buy them; and to think," he continued, with growing excitement, "that I was idiot enough to throw away sixty thousand francs on them—yes, Colonel, I, a man of more than average intelligence, bought them for that sum!"

"Do you mean to say," asked Josia, with some hesitation, "that you paid sixty thousand francs for them?"

"I do, indeed, my friend!"

"And they are worth—"

"Not a radish! But it is possible that some one might be found who would lend me five hundred francs upon them; and it will not be absolutely necessary to tell them about the volcanoes, I presume. And, after all, there is something impressive in sixty thousand francs worth of securities, even if one can't sell them to-day for a sou!"

"At all events," said the Colonel, amiably, "the fact of your having bought them for such a sum speaks volumes in your favor, when you wish to dispose of them."

"I do not know about that. Have you any of the stock of that Mutton Company?" added the incorrigible Ratier.

"Yes, some. Why do you wish to know?"

"Oh, nothing! I merely asked. No! the possession of securities does not always prove the good faith of their owner. And now, come on, my friends, come on!"

"Where are we to go?"

"With me; and Bolivia and my twelve silver dishes—we will take them along with us in the carriage."

"A carriage! Are we to take a carriage?" Josia ventured to ask.

"Timid soul!" answered Ratier; "do people go on foot when they are in a hurry?"

"But we have no money!"

"Of course not! if we had we should not be going to look for it. But as a concession to the exigencies of the hour seems to be expected of me, we will take a fiacre instead of a remise."

Boleslas sighed heavily, and the three friends started forth on their expedition. In ten minutes more Ratier was rushing like a whirlwind up his own staircase and entered his pretty bachelor quarters. From the depths of a dainty piece of furniture, standing in his bed-room, he fished out a huge bundle of lilac papers on which were inscribed, in letters an inch long, the word Bolivia. He looked at them with a dismal shake of his head, and made repeated but unsuccessful efforts to thrust them into the pocket of his overcoat.

"Cowards!" he murmured, gayly, "they hesitate to put themselves into the path of danger! I will tie them up in a silk handkerchief merely to humiliate them. What folly to be so proud and at the same time to be penniless!"

Uttering this philosophical reflection, he pulled open another drawer which was also full of paper, but paper of a very different nature—the lovely, crisp, rustling paper

of the Banque de France. He took out a few gold pieces and dropped them into his vest-pocket.

"I shall never be simple enough," he said to himself, "to lend money to that dear Boleslas; he would never return it to me: he is too fond of me for that! But if I borrow it from other people for him, he will feel obliged to repay it."

He locked the drawer and ran lightly down the stairs. Before he opened the carriage door he tossed into Josia's anxious face the silk handkerchief containing the Bolivia securities.

"What on earth is that?" exclaimed the Colonel.

"It is my capital!" replied Ratier, as he took his seat. "We will now proceed to call upon an amiable person, who may be induced to lend us some louis thereon. And now, my dear Colonel, by way of relieving the tedium of the hour, will you not tell me what you know about this abruptly terminated affair of that charming Mademoiselle Slavsky?"

"I know nothing whatever," answered the Colonel, sulkily. "I wait to hear by mail."

"Are not these ladies coming to Paris?"

"I am absolutely ignorant of their movements."

"But it must be very lonely for you? And the Mutton Association—how comes on that speculation?"

The Colonel shook his head sadly.

"It does not come on at all," he replied.

"Zounds!" cried Ratier. "How is that, when it commenced so well?"

"To be sure," answered the Colonel, mounting without hesitation the hobby-horse presented by the young man—all saddled and bridled, "it was a magnificent enterprise, with every prospect of success—"

"Like the Bolivia railroad," interrupted Ratier.

But Boleslas turned a deaf ear to this remark. "Look at it yourself, my dear fellow," he resumed. "The idea was a new one, entirely original—one to which all the governments in the world ought to lend their practical support—"

"That is a good phrase," interrupted Ratier. "I know it, too, by heart—that, and the page which follows, for it was I, you know, who wrote the prospectus."

"I beg your pardon," returned Boleslas, stiffly.

"Go on," said the young man, in an apologetic tone.

"I do not know what I was saying. You have a very strange trick, Ratier, of interrupting people in the midst of what they are saying. You have entirely broken the chain of my ideas!"

"Well, about the Association, is it dead? utterly dead?"

"My sheep are," answered the Colonel, mournfully.

"What! your wonderful rare breed, with which you expected to populate Europe?"

"The two are dead—the male and female," replied the Colonel, piteously.

"The two who came from Volhynia? or was it from Poissy?" asked Ratier, with the most innocent air.

The Colonel was utterly destitute of all sense of humor; he therefore replied, with some heat:

"From Volhynia, my dear fellow; how can you doubt it? It was an old huntsman, a servant of my mother's, who succeeded in capturing these two specimens in their native Russian forest—"

"And you brought them to France?"

"No; they remained in Lithuania with one of my relatives."

Ratier shrugged his shoulders.

"And it was these two creatures that you depended upon?"

"Yes; and this is my difficulty, for the young ones born—"

"In a menagerie," interrupted Ratier.

"Yes, in a menagerie, or, rather—but at all events they died before they were a year old."

"And their parents, inconsolable, followed them to the grave!" cried Ratier; "and thus terminated the whole business. The only wonder to me is where on earth you found subscribers to the stock of so senseless an enterprise."

"Senseless an enterprise! You did not so call it when—"

"When I wrote the prospectus. Very true. I was then intensely amused, and delighted in the long phrases of which you approved, and I did not take the trouble to inquire into the truth. But, pray, why did you not go to Poissy and supply the places of the dear creatures you lost?"

"To Poissy? Why Poissy?"

"Because there is a good cattle market there, and sheep can be purchased at a bargain. But here we are!"

The Colonel's not over quick and brilliant intellect was so disturbed by the repeated attacks and interruptions of the young man, that he mechanically descended from the carriage, without finding a word of reply. Ratier recalled him to a sense of the situation by putting the bundle of Bolivia securities into his hand.

"See what you can do. Try your fortune now."

"My fortune? It is yours. Try it yourself!"

"Not I!" answered Ratier, laconically. "The man knows me. He won't lend me a sou!"

In all large cities, and in many small ones, a certain class of people exists who are either very acute or very innocent, according to the point of view from which we regard them, but who are, at all events, speculators making loans at enormous rates of interest on doubtful securities, which are often left in their hands by reason of the complete ruin of their owners. Many of these securities turn out to be utterly worthless; but sometimes it comes to pass that certain stock not quoted at the Bourse rises to a fabulous value, and the happy money-lender finds that he has made "a splendid thing out of it!" Some are ruined in this way; others, again, grow rich. The morality of such enterprises may be questioned, as the result is entirely a matter of chance.

The man to whom Ratier presented his friends was perfectly *comme il faut* in his appearance and manners. He was cold and civil. He took the silk handkerchief, and, as he unknotted it, examined the faces of the three gentlemen. He unfolded the securities, glanced at them,

gave a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, and retied them.

"They are good for nothing," he said, as he brushed a speck of dust from his vest.

The Colonel, pale and disturbed, turned anxiously toward Ratier, who, as calm as Destiny, was looking out of the window. Josia, more disturbed even than the Colonel, also gazed at Ratier, both men seeming to regard him as the arbiter of their fate. Ratier, however, made no sign of coming to the rescue, and Boleslas, seeing himself thus left to his own resources, made a desperate plunge.

"How much will you lend me on these?" he said.

The money-lender looked at him with a certain respect. A man capable of such a question, after what he had just heard, must know what he was about.

"How much do you want?"

"Three thousand francs!" said the Colonel, audaciously. After the first fire he regained all the courage of a man of the world, and of one, moreover, familiar with disastrous enterprises.

The money-lender gave another shrug, and flecked off another speck of imaginary dust.

"I repeat," said the Colonel, "that I want three thousand, not two thousand—nor one! This is the first time we have had any business relations, but, if we come to terms now, it will probably not be the last. Three thousand francs or nothing!"

The Colonel took up the bundle which represented sixty thousand francs thrown away, and seemed about to depart.

"You make a mistake, Jeffsohn," said Ratier, as he placed his hat on his head. "You have made enough money out of me to be willing to oblige one of my friends. I shall bring no other persons here, but it will not be they or me who will be the losers."

His hand was on the door; the man opened his lips:

"Two hundred francs," he said, slowly.

"You are laughing at us, Jeffsohn, and it is not well. I thought, in consequence of your association with me, that you had learned some good manners."

"Tell me the honest truth," said Jeffsohn, his own convictions somewhat shaken by the young man's assurance. "Do you yourself think these good for anything?"

"Good for anything! Sixty thousand francs are in that handkerchief! At least," Ratier added to himself, "that is what they cost me. Come, Colonel," he said, aloud, "I know some one else who will do what we desire. We are in no hurry, you know."

Mechanically the Colonel drew out his watch—such a superb watch! Jeffsohn was much impressed. The watch was a real watch, and a repeater too, for it struck half-past two at this moment.

"Will you take five hundred francs?" he said, more courteously.

"Come, Colonel," repeated Ratier.

"One thousand," said Jeffsohn, quietly.

Ratier stopped. "Hand them over!" he exclaimed.

The key turned in the money-lender's safe. Josia became very red in the face; the Colonel repressed an air

of eagerness; and Ratier went to the desk and took up a sheet of stamped paper.

"I, if you please, will be the person to dictate the conditions," he said, coolly; "I have always had a taste for this style of literature."

Jeffsohn read over what Ratier had written, dotted an *i* and crossed a *t*, and then handed the Colonel a pen.

"Sign!" said Ratier, in a melodramatic tone.

The Colonel hesitated, and then signed with a huge sigh, which said many things—regret for his days of past splendor—admiration and gratitude for his friend—the bitter pleasure of self-sacrifice—a thought of Madame Slavsky—a sort of shame in finding himself possessor of a thing which did not belong to him, and a thousand other sentiments contradictory and diverse.

While Jeffsohn signed in his turn, Josia, behind the Colonel's back, gratefully pressed Ratier's hand.

When Jeffsohn's door closed upon them, Boleslas stopped to thank his young friend.

"I do not know what I should have done without you," he murmured; "but did you not think those securities worthless?"

"I thought so, but it seems that Jeffsohn thought otherwise. One of us is mistaken, and I prefer that it should be he, rather than I!"

Josia preceded them, and pushed into the gutter a piece of orange peel, which lay in front of the carriage door.

"See the Chevalier beginning his day's work!" cried Ratier.

"Pray explain, Josia, why it is that you can never see an unfortunate bit of that yellow skin without destroying it with such absolute fury. It is certainly a great mystery, or have you made a vow, or is it the color which excites you to fury? Tell us the truth, my friend!"

But Josia, the color of a poppy, made no reply.

"Where are we going now?" asked the Colonel. "We have a large amount yet to make up."

"One of your friends arrived at the Hôtel du Louvre yesterday. He ought to have some money: go and ask him!"

"Who is it?"

"Young Fiacre de Remise."

"Fiacre de Remise?"

"Something like that. Your Russian names are too big mouthfuls for me."

"It is Pietro de Rémisoff, perhaps," said Josia, with a faint smile.

"Pietro Rémisoff!" repeated the Colonel, in great delight. "It could not be better! Rémisoff here! I have known him since his boyhood. His father was one of my greatest friends."

"Coachman! to the Louvre," said Ratier, with the air of a conqueror.

"To the shop, or the museum?" asked the man, turning up his collar with the invariable gesture of a coachman before he starts.

"To the Hôtel."

"All right, sir. If you were going to the shop, or to

the museum, you would have to pay in advance on account of the many doors."

Hardly were they seated, than Ratier recommenced his attack on Josia.

"You have not yet told me, young secretary, why you have such a spite against orange peel. What disaster have they brought on your head, or heels? Ah! my friend, I always looked upon you as more amiable."

"Josia is quite right," said the Colonel, arousing himself from a reverie in which he had seen Rémisoff surrounded by piles of gold and bank-notes. "Nothing is more dangerous than orange peel on the sidewalk. I remember that last year Mademoiselle Slavsky sprained her ankle frightfully by slipping on a piece, just as she was entering a carriage."

"Ah! indeed; and since then it is that Josia annihilates every bit he sees. It is a good idea, Josia, and as soon as we leave the carriage I shall press you to my heart. Here space is lacking. But tell me, if the orange peel is here, and Mademoiselle Slavsky at Monaco, what good it does her for you to remove this dangerous thing from the paths of other people?"

"I thought, possibly," stammered Josia, "that perhaps some one where she is, might be inspired with the same thought, and would render her a similar service."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Ratier, shouting with laughter. "Animal magnetism—second sight—somnambulism—electric affinities—one and all! Ah! dear, honest Josia, what a good fellow you are! But in the main your idea is not

so bad a one; and the Society for the Protection of Animals should pay you a handsome premium for it; and this I say, with all due deference to Mademoiselle Slavsky."

The carriage stopped. Pietro Rémisoff was at home. He occupied a pretty apartment on the second floor, sleeping-room, dressing-room, and salon, for which he paid an enormous price. But his grand principle in life was that he owed himself the utmost respect, and on no consideration would he have ascended a story higher. That he did not take rooms on the first floor was simply due to his fear of ridicule; but he openly declared that were he married, those were the only ones which he would presume to ask a wife to share.

"Come in," said the Colonel, turning toward Ratier.

"By no means," answered the astute young man. "Such matters are more satisfactorily settled in a tête-à-tête. Besides I have to hear Josia's confession!"

The Colonel never listened when any one spoke of his secretary; he therefore nodded and slowly ascended the steps; while the two young men seated themselves to await his return.

"You love her then, Josia?" said Ratier, confidentially.

Josia started as if pricked by a spur, but refused utterly to understand, or to open his lips.

"Pshaw! Own up, my lad. There is nothing to be ashamed of. She is pretty, fascinating, clever, and good. Ah! if—" and Ratier gnawed his moustache, and spun a chair, which was in front of him, round on one leg.

"You think I am right then?" asked Josia, uncon-

sciously abandoning his secret to his friend's tender mercies.

"I do, indeed. She has been miserably brought up, without any education of mind or morals; but so far she seems to have come out of the fire without smutch or stain. No one could wonder at anything that happened, when we remember the class of people about her."

"I do not understand you," said Josia, with no little indignation. "Madame Slavsky and her daughter see the very best society."

"Granted! the best society of a certain kind, unquestionably. The poor little soul—without her mother—"

"Would be much to be pitied," affirmed Josia, energetically.

Ratier turned round and faced him; opened his lips as if to speak; then shrugged his shoulders in a hopeless sort of way, and resumed his occupation of turning his chair.

"With a father like hers," continued the secretary, "she would have the worst possible examples; with—"

"Such a mother," interrupted Ratier, in a satirical tone, "all is as it should be!"

"So I think," answered honest Josia, in perfect good faith. "This divorced father, who deals out his money in such a parsimonious manner—"

"Pray tell me," asked the young Frenchman, "in your country, does a divorce affect only one—the husband, or the wife?"

"By no means; both, in an equal degree."

"Ah! Then, Madame Slavsky is divorced, too?"

"Certainly," replied Josia, who, in the whole course of his life, had never comprehended an irony.

"That is just what I wished to know. But, at all events, no one can ever reproach her with being parsimonious."

"Ah, no! She likes to live in style. It is a most fortunate thing, you see, Ratier, for her, that she has a friend like the Colonel—a tried friend, who is always ready to devote himself to her and to her interests."

"And it is a great happiness for the Colonel to have a friend who gives him such constant opportunities for the exercise of his devotion."

"Yes, indeed," sighed Josia.

"Poor simpleton!" thought Ratier. "He makes me think of a gold-fish in a drawing-room aquarium. In vain does he live surrounded by transparent walls; he sees nothing of what is going on! Tell me," he resumed, "are these ladies coming to Paris?"

"I do not know," sighed the secretary.

"You would like it, if they came?"

Josia smiled, faintly.

"And now, that this marriage is broken off," continued Ratier, "why do you not enter the lists?"

A reproachful glance made Ratier, who was by no means ill-natured *au fond*, quite ashamed of himself. He took Josia's hand and said, in a hearty, kindly voice:

"I am a fool, worse than a fool, and I ask your pardon. There are some few things too serious for jesting; but I

am always making mistakes. I will not torment you again. You are a good fellow, and I am your friend."

Josia, who never bore malice toward any one, answered, with equal cordiality:

"I never should have spoken to you of her. You drew me on unwarily. But I beg of you do not think ill of Madame Slavsky. She is a truly good and admirable woman, for whom I have the greatest respect and affection."

"I dare say your bump of veneration is well developed. So we will say no more about it. Now, then what shall we talk about?"

"Of yourself," said Josia, beamingly; "of your plans and of your travels—"

"But you have travelled, too; you have seen all that I have seen."

"But not in the same way. I do not know how to took at things. I am always thinking of business. The Colonel, you know, is in a tight place, and I keep all his accounts. For four years it seems to me that I have done little else than add up columns of figures—"

"To be invariably rewarded by a deficit," answered Ratier, laughing. "Forgive me, my friend; but I am lacking in veneration. But all is well that ends well—that you must admit. And now, let us have a cigar."

During this conversation, the Colonel had been received by Rémisoff, whom he found enjoying a delicious nap, on the sofa in his salon. Awakened suddenly, the young man started up and rubbed his eyes; grumbled at being dis-

turbed; muttered in Russ, "The devil take him!" and said aloud, in French, "Come in!"

"My dear boy!" exclaimed the Colonel, extending his arms.

Pietro Rémisoff, only half-awake, permitted himself to be embraced three times, after the Russian fashion; and then, in a sulky voice, muttered:

"How on earth did you know that I was in Paris? I did hope that I might be here a few days incognito!"

"It was Ratier who told me."

Rémisoff murmured something which did not sound precisely like a benediction.

"Take a seat, Colonel," he said, as ungraciously as possible.

Boleslas placed his hat on a table and seated himself, entirely unabashed by the manner of his reception; in fact, he rather enjoyed it; for, like a spirited battle-charger, the smell of powder exhilarated him. He had entered the room somewhat discomfited by the idea of asking a favor of a man so much younger than himself, who, moreover, it was quite possible would refuse him. But as soon as he saw the mood that Rémisoff was in, the love of contest took possession of him; he—a man of intrigue—sniffed the battle from afar and girded up his loins.

"Are you from the north now, or from the south?" he asked, with a paternal smile.

"From the south, of course," answered Rémisoff, sulkily. "One would hardly come from anywhere but a warm climate in the month of April."

"General Thomasine came yesterday from St. Petersburg, nevertheless; and he tells me that he saw, just before leaving, your charming sister, the Countess Morof—"

"She writes to me every week," muttered Rémisoff, stifling a yawn.

"Did you go through Nice?"

"No; I went to Marseilles by sea."

"Then you saw nothing of Madame Slavsky, and her daughter?"

"Nothing," repeated Rémisoff, drearily, as he stretched his legs out upon a chair.

Boleslas decided on a grand coup.

"I came to see you, my dear fellow, because I have a great affection for you; and also because I have a favor to ask."

The young man's face lengthened perceptibly; but Boleslas paid little attention.

"It is a money matter; and this is precisely the condition of things: A friend of mine is in the greatest possible embarrassment, and implores me to come immediately to his assistance. I have gathered together all I possess; but find myself still very far from the necessary sum. Now you, thank Heaven, are wealthy, and have it in your power to relieve a suffering fellow-creature."

Rémisoff drew a perfumed silk handkerchief from his vest-pocket, passed it over his face, and returned it to its place, arranging it carefully, so that the monogram—an inch and a half long—could be seen; and made no reply.

"Well?" said the Colonel, encouragingly.

"The truth is, Colonel," stammered the unfortunate, "I have very little money on hand just now—"

"That is a good joke! You, a nabob!"

"Upon my word of honor, I have just arrived from Naples—"

"Where you have been guilty of extravagances, you rascal!"

The Colonel was so genial, that, in spite of himself, Rémisoff smiled.

"Possibly!" he said, in a tone that the world has agreed to call modest; but which is in reality the height of fatuity.

Boleslas, who had risen from his chair, gave him two or three little taps on the shoulder. Rémisoff drew out his handkerchief, then remembering that he had once shown it, thrust it hastily back again, by no means, however, neglecting to leave out the cipher.

"Pshaw!" resumed the Colonel, "I will venture to say that you are not entirely cleaned out. You must have something."

"Literally nothing. I am looking for money daily; but my fool of an Intendant is as usual in arrears. I ought to have received it long since; but those rascals—"

He finished his phrase with a heavy frown.

"How much have you?" asked the Colonel, abruptly.

"Almost nothing—twelve or fifteen hundred francs."

"That will be quite enough for me," said Boleslas, quickly; "or rather, I can make it do for the present. I thank you heartily, my dear young friend. Besides, you know I only want it for twenty-four hours at the most."

"But it is impossible for me to be left without a sou!"

"Have you not a shelter and your meals? Come! you will not be so badly off for a few hours!"

"I will let you have five hundred francs; but be it distinctly understood that it is only for twenty-four hours."

Rémisoff unlocked his desk; he was lost! As he was about to open the bundle of bank-notes, Boleslas took it from his hands.

"Two—four—eight. You have eight hundred francs here. Have you nothing more?"

"Yes, some gold," answered Rémisoff, without any distrust.

He opened a pocket-book, and turned out some gold pieces, whose tinkling music charmed the Colonel.

"How much?"

"Five hundred and sixty."

"Then you have thirteen hundred and sixty francs. Very well; I will try to make that amount suffice," concluded the Colonel.

And as the young man was about to close the pocket-book in which he had replaced the gold, Boleslas quietly took it from his hand, and placed it in his pocket with the bank-notes which he had not relinquished.

"Colonel! I beg your pardon! Colonel, it is quite impossible."

"You are fed and sheltered, and yet refuse to assist those who are suffering!" said Boleslas, severely.

"Fed and sheltered, to be sure," cried Rémisoff, almost

ready to weep; "but what am I to do until my money arrives? I have not one penny for amusements!"

"Amusements! Ah! that is the trouble, is it? Very well; I will take it upon myself to amuse you until your money arrives—that is to say—until I pay you this that I have borrowed."

"What shall we do to-night?" said Rémisoff, but half appeased.

"To-night I have a surprise in store for you. I will take care of you, you will see!"

"But, Colonel, I literally have not one single sou!" cried the young man, fumbling in his vest-pocket. "Give me back something."

With the most amiable of smiles, Boleslas took two louis from the pocket-book, and presented them to their owner, who took them with a most discontented air.

"What do you suppose a man can do with twenty francs?" he grumbled.

"But remember that it is I who pay your expenses."

"If you can do that, you surely have no need of my money: so give it back to me!"

"Hüsh!" said the Colonel, putting his finger on his lips with a mysterious air. "You shall see what you shall see!"

And he departed, dragging with him poor Rémisoff, with his empty pockets.

"Let us hurry," said the Colonel; "my friend expects the money by to-night's mail."

"You have ample time," remarked Rémisoff, with a mighty yawn, "it is only four o'clock—"

"Four o'clock! Good heavens! We shall never be ready in time. Come, quick!"

As they rushed through the corridor, Rémisoff had a brilliant idea.

"I will wager a bottle of champagne," he exclaimed, "that this money is intended for Madame Slavsky!"

Boleslas pretended not to hear; but Rémisoff was too tenacious by nature to be thus thrust aside.

"Say, Colonel; is it for Madame Slavsky? You had better tell me! I do not intend to be kept in the dark in this way! Madame Slavsky has a pretty daughter!"

But Boleslas seemed to have suddenly grown very deaf. "Hurry! hurry!" he continued to say, until they reached the place where Josia and Ratier were waiting.

"What are we to do now?" asked Ratier, shaking hands with Rémisoff coldly.

"To my room," replied the Colonel. "I am still deficient in the amount."

"How much have you?" asked Ratier, drawing him aside.

"One thousand, and thirteen hundred francs."

"Which makes two thousand three hundred and sixty francs," interrupted Ratier, "so that we only require the miserable sum of six hundred and forty francs. Could not the little man furnish you with all you required? How extraordinary! Were I rich I—"

"I took all he had," the Colonel hastened to say, "and I have even agreed to amuse him until I can return this money."

This was too much for Ratier. He leaned against the wall and laughed until he was utterly exhausted.

"Ah!" he said at last, when he could speak. "You have taken him in to nurse, have you? I am afraid that it will not be long, Colonel, for he must be near the age of cutting his wisdom teeth. However, good luck to you, my sagacious friend. Can we four get into this carriage?" he said to the coachman asleep on the box.

"In that carriage!" said Rémisoff, profoundly disgusted. "A fiacre with a place for luggage behind!—a fiacre that goes to railway stations! I will not enter such a vehicle!"

"How delightful it is to be rich!" cried Ratier. "Ah! well, my dear fellow, send for a barouche; we, as we are in a hurry, will go in this!"

"I prefer to walk," muttered Rémisoff, suddenly remembering the state of his finances.

"Very well! To the Hôtel de Bade, and quickly!" said Ratier to the coachman, as he pushed his companions in, and followed them.

Rémisoff stood with his hands in his empty pockets, looking after them. He finally uttered a profound sigh, and the word "imbecile!" in Russ. Was it to himself, to the Colonel, or to Ratier, that he addressed this sentence? We will allow our readers to decide for themselves, while the poor youth, more sulky than ever, takes his way to the Hôtel de Bade. At first Rémisoff walked very slowly, as is naturally the case when one is out of humor and is going whither one has no inclination to go.

It is a mere protest that one allows oneself to make. Finally a certain curiosity quickened his step; he asked himself why the Colonel was in such haste to send this money to Madame Slavsky. Perhaps there was some thrilling tale to hear! Who could tell? Rémisoff had always had a vague notion that Madame Slavsky's history was full of romance and of strange events; and to himself, who found life, even at his age, strangely wearisome—what a resource was possibly opening before him! And then, as he had said to the Colonel, Mademoiselle Slavsky was a great beauty. This last reflection gave additional fleetness to his steps, and he was quite out of breath as he reached the Hôtel de Bade. As he went up the staircase he heard an animated conversation in the Colonel's room.

"Come, hurry," said Ratier, "hand over your watch. And you, Josia, your sleeve-buttons."

"They are not gold," said the secretary, sadly.

"Your buttons, your watch," repeated Ratier—this time however, addressing Rémisoff, who stood in astonishment on the threshold.

"But—"

"There are no 'buts' in this hour of distress," answered Ratier, in a tragic voice. "Hurry, I beg of you, or we shall miss the mail."

He took the young Russian's watch from his vest-pocket, and mechanically Rémisoff loosened the chain from the buttonhole in which it was fastened.

"I will not," he said, as he did so. "What are you going to do now?"

"Take them to the pawnbroker's," answered Ratier, calmly.

"Why?"

"Because we cannot otherwise make up the necessary sum—"

"To the pawnbroker's! How disgraceful!—I will not!" cried Rémisoff, passionately.

"The crime makes the shame, and not the scaffold," quoted Ratier, sententiously—remaining master of the situation—that is to say—of the watch. "How! would you refuse to make such a trivial sacrifice to aid one of your fellow-creatures? Would you prefer the vain pleasure of displaying these baubles? Give me your sleeve-buttons quickly! Upon my word! Rémisoff, you will make us lose the mail!"

And the sleeve-buttons joined the watch and the chain.

"And that superb sapphire ring!" exclaimed Ratier, his love of mischief extremely gratified by this whole scene.

"Now, Josia, run to the pawnbroker's and bring us the money—"

"Go at once to the post-office," interrupted the Colonel, in a tone of dignified reproof. "We have lost too much time and the mail will be closed."

Josia darted off like an arrow. Rémisoff, angry and humiliated, was quite ready to indulge in a paroxysm of boyish tears, and took his seat at the other end of the room, and, pressing his nose against the window panes, looked out into the street.

"What friends you have!" said Ratier, approaching.

"Friends!" cried Rémisoff, his lips quivering. — "Friends!"

"Yes, friends! Young man, you have little idea of the extent of the confidence we have in you; of the deep feeling of friendship with which you have inspired us! Is it of the first-comer, think you, that we should have asked such a service? Or should we have applied to any man in whom we had not the most absolute trust? Do you not look upon it as a proof of the truest friendship, of the sincerest esteem? Could we do more, I ask?"

"I think not, indeed!" said Rémisoff, grimly, as yet unconvinced. With a heavy frown and compressed lips he seemed about to fly at his friend's throat rather than into his arms. Ratier saw that he must go further.

"You have nobly come to the aid of the best of women!"

"Ratier!" said the Colonel, severely.

"Colonel Boleslas, we have no right to any secrets from the friend who has shown such devotion to us."

"Then it is for Madame Slavsky?" asked Rémisoff, eagerly, with a sudden change of expression which delighted Ratier.

The Colonel did not reply, but he made no effort to prevent his friend from speaking.

"Yes, it is for her."

"She has been losing at cards, then?" cried Rémisoff, completely consoled by this gratification of his curiosity. "What a woman! She is a roulette-table in the flesh! Ah! Colonel, such friendships are a little expensive! You will tell Madame Slavsky that I gave my

ornaments to release her from her embarrassments, will you not?" and Rémisoff approached the Colonel in an insinuating way.

"Are you in love with her?" asked Ratier, in a tone of reproach.

"By no means. Good heavens! no. But she is very agreeable, and then she has a remarkably pretty daughter! And besides, one naturally likes to have the credit for what one does, you know!"

"You shall have your ornaments to-morrow," said the Colonel, haughtily; "be under no concern; and Madame Slavsky shall certainly be informed of the service you have done her."

Thus peace was made, and Josia coming in found perfect harmony in the Colonel's room. But hardly had his face appeared than the Colonel darted from his seat with singular activity, and, before his secretary could speak, took him aside.

Ratier, who had watched this little by-play with malicious satisfaction, began to talk with Rémisoff, whom, in about two minutes and a half, he drove to the verge of insanity with a dozen new theories on the best way of succeeding with women, according to their age and position in the world.

In the meantime Boleslas was interrogating Josia in the corridor.

"How much did you get in all?"

"Eleven hundred and sixty-five francs."

"And you sent three thousand francs?"

"Yes, Colonel; and I paid the carriage. Altogether I have expended forty-five francs, and I have about four hundred and eighty francs and the sleeve-buttons—Rémisoff's. As we had more money than we absolutely required for our purpose, I considered it useless—"

"You did well, Josia," interrupted the Colonel, in a tone of dignified approval. "You are an auxiliary who is both discreet and intelligent. And now pay two hundred francs, on account, to the hotel; say that I am too busy to attend to my bill to-day, but that I send this in the meantime. Give me the rest."

While Josia was faithfully discharging his mission, Boleslas put the money in his pocket, but held in his hand the sleeve-buttons.

"You see, my young friend," he said, approaching Rémisoff, "how unworthy were your complaints and suspicions, and you may imagine how deeply they have wounded me. These trifles were not needed; Josia, with the prudence which is his strongest characteristic, has brought them back in safety, and I return them to you. You have pained me, Rémisoff—deeply pained me."

The Colonel was so much moved that Rémisoff could do nothing else than overwhelm him with apologies and excuses.

"And now, Vive la joie!" cried Ratier. "We have worked hard and are entitled to amuse ourselves. What time is it?"

Each one mechanically felt for his watch, but the four pockets were, one and all, empty; for Ratier had taken

good care to leave his at home. They all laughed and regarded it as an excellent joke.

"Fortunately," said Ratier, "the clock is left to us."

"Quarter past six—and time for dinner."

"We dine here," said the Colonel; "the cuisine is not all which could be desired, but the wines are passable, and then—"

"And then?"

"I have an idea—you will see!"

They dined and then went to the circus, and afterward to supper somewhere, but neither Rémisoff nor Josia were able to remember the next day where, and the Colonel and Ratier preserved an obstinate silence when questioned.

After all, what did it matter? One thing was certain: they had both drank far more than they ought, and it was several days before they were altogether themselves. This was what Ratier and the Colonel called "amusing" the young Russian, but it was an amusement which they both took good care to share only to a very limited extent.

The next day, about seven in the morning, Boleslas was slumbering peacefully, when he dreamed that he heard a rap on his door. He woke, shouting, "Come in," and looked about in a startled way. No one was there, however. He turned over and drew the coverings closer about his meagre frame. Again came the knock: it was no dream, evidently.

"Come in!" he said, starting up.

The handle turned, but the door was fastened. Hardly knowing what he was doing, Boleslas stretched out his

arm and drew the bolt, and fell back with haggard eyes and a pale face.

Yet it was not the head of Medusa which appeared; it was only Madame Slavsky.

At this apparition Boleslas wished to beat a retreat, but where could he go, and how could he clothe himself? He seized the bed-clothes and drew them close up round his chin, and from amid his pillows—

"You! dear madam, you here! at this hour!"

Madame Slavsky placed her finger on her lips, shut the door and locked it, went to the windows, drew aside the curtains, and then returning to the bed where the Colonel lay watching her with great discomposure—said gayly,

"Yes, it is I, and in the flesh. Do not wake any one and we will have a long talk. I came by the night train."

The Colonel, seeing her in so amiable a frame of mind, ventured to extend his right hand, into which Madame Slavsky placed the tips of her fingers. The Colonel kissed this beautiful dimpled hand, which was covered with jewels. The lady leaned over her host and pressed her lips lightly on his brow. This little ceremony happily concluded, Madame Slavsky sank into the arm-chair, which was encumbered with all the Colonel's garments which were not on the floor.

"I am utterly worn out," she murmured. "Such a night! I never once closed my eyes, and yet—" She folded her hands in her lap, and fixing on Boleslas a look full of joy and triumph, she said, in a low voice:

"I come with sixty-three thousand francs in gold and bank-notes. Here they are!"

She threw on the bed a small Russia leather travelling-bag, which the Colonel devoured with admiring eyes, but did not venture to touch. They looked at each other, hardly daring to speak lest the beautiful dream should vanish.

Madame Slavsky was forty-two, but no one would have thought her more than thirty-five; tall and of commanding bearing, like almost all Russian women of high birth, she added to her other charms the feline grace, which makes the fair natives of Poland so fascinating to men of all nations, and so obnoxious to most women.

Barbe Slavsky's complexion was still of that creamy whiteness which seems to be the prerogative of her nation; despising and rejecting all cosmetics, bismuth, and Poudre de Riz, she displayed, with insolent pride, that wonderful complexion at Monaco by daylight; but this delicate skin was beginning to be covered with fine wrinkles, the full lips were growing fuller, the eyelids were becoming heavy, and her figure threatened excessive embonpoint. In short, Madame Slavsky was forty-two, an irremediable calamity, and one which daily grew harder for her to bear.

We present her to our readers, who may easily imagine that such a mother would be anxious to marry her daughter of twenty-one, since she could not keep her longer in the nursery.

"Sixty-three thousand francs!" muttered the Colonel; "we are saved!"

Madame Slavsky nodded triumphantly.

"But," exclaimed Boleslas, "if you left last night you did not receive my package?"

"What package?"

"The one I announced at noon by a telegram."

"No, I have not received it; I was all day at the roulette table. I have not eaten a mouthful for twenty-four hours."

"Permit me," said Boleslas, extending his hand to the bell.

Madame Slavsky arrested him with an imperative gesture.

"What are you thinking about?" she said. "I have much to tell you. To think that Katia—"

"Ah, yes, Katia! It is true, then. And where is she?" asked the Colonel, eying with some dismay all he could see of the coat on which his guest was calmly sitting.

"Katia is at Monaco with her governess."

"The Irish lady?"

"Yes, the one who is always eating."

"But why did you leave her?"

"Merely because it was necessary for me to see you, and she is unendurable in travelling. Besides, she is one of those girls who are intensely curious—"

"But how could you induce her to remain behind?"

"I told her that I was in the greatest need of money to pay my bill at the hotel, where the proprietor was beginning to be very troublesome. I had telegraphed to you—"

"For a considerable sum," interrupted the Colonel; "and I sent you at once three thousand francs—"

"Most excellent friend!"

Madame Slavsky extended her hand to the Colonel, who took it, kissed it, and at once put his arm again under the coverlid.

"Such a time!" said Boleslas; "but I will tell you this on another occasion. To return to Katia—you left her, you say?"

"In pledge at the hotel, as it were," answered Madame Slavsky. "It was, in fact, the only thing I could do, and as I return to-night, or to-morrow morning—"

"To-morrow," said Boleslas; "twenty-four hours are necessary to arrange our matters satisfactorily."

"Are they not in a satisfactory condition?" asked Barbe, in astonishment; "your telegram—"

"Ah! dear friend, my telegram is only another proof of my affection for you, and now that you are able to arrange your business as you would like, I can venture to acknowledge to you that I have never been in so uncomfortable a position before. I am in debt in every direction—"

"That is now of no consequence," said Madame Slavsky, with a queenly gesture. "As to Katia, the little goose is becoming absolutely ungovernable; she refuses to obey me!"

The Colonel raised his eyes to the ceiling in mute protest at Katia's ingratitude.

"I forbade her absolutely ever to play. I forbade her to enter the rooms even; you know, Boleslas, some men have such silly prejudices, and I wish to run no risk of

shocking any of them, and I therefore, as I tell you, forbade her distinctly even entering the rooms. Her fiancé was always with her from twelve to two, the hours which I invariably devote to Roulette. Miss Amroth, of course, was present also at the interviews between Katia and her lover. We were only waiting for the money to come from Monsieur Slavsky, when suddenly three days ago the Marquis—"

"What Marquis?" asked Boleslas, much puzzled.

"The Marquis Braccioli."

"And who is he?"

"The Marquis Braccioli? He is, or rather was, Katia's fiancé."

"Katia's fiancé? Why, was she not betrothed to Merentzof?"

"What on earth are you dreaming of, Boleslas? It is more than six weeks since the Merentzof marriage was broken! And the very day of the rupture, Braccioli asked Catherine's hand, and I promised it to him. Is it possible you did not know this?"

"This is the very first word I have heard on the subject."

"I must have forgotten to write you about it," said Madame Slavsky, quite undisturbed. "Well, then, the Braccioli marriage promised well; but the Marquis on Monday last, not finding Katia in our rooms when he called, made inquiries and discovered that she had gone to the rooms. He was highly incensed, for he is a man of many prejudices and a narrow mind. So he rushes

off, and there at the roulette table finds Katia. She had been economizing for a month, poor child! to gratify this fancy."

"Well!" said the Colonel, so much interested that he half rose on his elbow.

"Naturally the Marquis stood and glared at Katia, who was entirely unconscious of his presence. He went to her and put his hand on her arm. She started and lost, poor child. Seeing him she exclaimed: 'Ah, I was sure that there was some disturbing element present. Go away! I beg of you: you are interfering with my play.'"

"And she was quite right," muttered the Colonel.

Madame Slavsky shrugged her shoulders. "Of course she was right! But what can one say to a man bristling with prejudices? In short, he went away as she requested, but he never came back again."

"And you—where were you all this time?"

"In the room on the right, where I was losing at Trente et Quarante. When I reached home I found Katia in tears. She had lost all her small stock of money, and had received from the Marquis a most polite note, a very model of courtesy, but there was a complete rupture, you understand."

"What a simpleton!" muttered Boleslas, "when so charming a girl was concerned!"

"And then came in my bill at the hotel. Not knowing where to turn, I sent a despatch to you in hot haste; but I was far from supposing that I should cause you any annoyance—"

"Which is not of the smallest consequence!" interposed Boleslas, gallantly. Then looking at the travelling bag, he said: "And now we shall be free once more!"

"Yes, entirely free," said Madame Slavsky, "and that is a great deal to say, for among other things I owe nine thousand francs to my dressmaker. And I borrowed ten thousand from Madame Satof—to be sure she can wait."

"Is she in Paris?"

"No, at Isola Bella, where she will stay for another month."

The Colonel shrugged his shoulders as if to indicate that it was preposterous to think of paying a debt to any person who was to enjoy the blessing of such a climate for yet another month.

"And then, too," continued Madame Slavsky, "there are the three thousand roubles I borrowed from General Thomine the day I had that fearful run of luck on the red—you remember, Boleslas—and I must pay that at all events," and the charming woman sighed.

Boleslas echoed the sigh.

"And then, I have bills in every direction, but I can push them along; and you, Boleslas, how do you stand?"

Boleslas went into a lengthy explanation, so lengthy that we will not attempt to give an account of its complications.

The hotel was all alive by the time it was completed, and Madame Slavsky softly opened the door, and assuring herself that there was no one in the corridor, regained her room as silently as possible.

The Colonel had completed his toilette by the time that Josia appeared. The faithful secretary, still disturbed by the events of the previous day, had by no means recovered his equanimity, either of mind or body. He was ashamed of the excesses of the previous evening. His inflamed eyes looked smaller than ever, while his face was absolutely ghastly in its color.

"Well! Josia, any news?" asked the Colonel, mechanically, for his mind was fully occupied by the brilliant prospect opened before him by Madame Slavsky. He had entirely forgotten the "amusement" of the previous evening.

Josia had heard nothing, he said, and these few words were uttered in so doleful a tone that the Colonel turned to look at him, and remembering what had happened, decided to improve the occasion by a small moral lecture.

"It seems to me, Josia," he said, coldly, "that you allowed yourself last evening to be carried beyond the bounds of propriety and temperance."

Josia's head drooped under this paternal reproof, until his chin was buried in the folds of his cravat, no longer fastened by the gold pin which he usually wore. The pin was at the pawnbroker's with all the rest of the things.

"There is no harm, my young friend," resumed Boleslas, "in amusing one's self under certain restrictions, but I am afraid that yesterday you disregarded these restrictions. Remember, my child, that it is temperance in all things which distinguishes man from the brute creation. In future, I trust you will never so far forget yourself. Let

the subject now be forgotten!" and the Colonel waved his hand loftily, while Josia gazed at him with eyes full of tears and gratitude.

Poor fellow! He had been often pardoned in this same way for faults which he had not committed, and each time he received the forgiveness in the same spirit of humility.

"We have much to do to-day, Josia," resumed Boleslas; "and first, I wish you to go at once to Rémisoff, and beg him to come to me as soon as he has breakfasted, and then go to Ratier's." Josia bowed, and departed in silence to execute these commissions. When he returned, he was told that the Colonel was at breakfast; he hurried to the dining-room, and what was his amazement, to see seated opposite each other, Colonel Boleslas and Madame Slavsky, calmly discussing the various dishes sent up to them by the chef.

"Madame Slavsky!" exclaimed Josia, more overwhelmed by respect and admiration than ever before.

With an amiable smile the charming traveller offered him her hand; Josia pressed his lips upon it, and then quietly slipped into a chair by the side of the Colonel, without venturing to open his lips.

Any one would have supposed that the Hôtel de Bade was Madame Slavsky's place of residence. The day's excitement at the gambling-table, and the night's travel, had left not one trace of fatigue upon her face. She ate with great delicacy, but with evident enjoyment, and drank only water, slightly reddened with wine.

This wonderful woman was, at table, quite as perfect as

she was in every other position in life. The truth is, few women know how to eat, although it is an indispensable accomplishment which all mothers should teach their daughters. A bit of rare filet placed upon the plate before her disappeared without any one being able to say just how or when. No one had seen her lips part, except to smile or to speak. If the knife and the fork had been employed, it was simply as an amusement for idle fingers; nevertheless, another bit of filet soon joined the first.

The roll lay almost untouched at the side of her plate—for bread is fattening, and Madame Slavsky religiously followed Banting.

"And Mademoiselle Catherine?" at last Josia ventured to say, after vainly struggling to find something eatable on the dishes, presented by the waiter to this late comer one after another.

"My daughter is at Monaco," said Madame Slavsky, still smiling.

Josia's heart, which had been beating furiously, sank down to his boots; he pushed aside his plate—why did he care what he ate?

"Have you seen Ratier?" asked Boleslas.

"No—he was out, but I saw Rémisoff, who will be here late in the afternoon."

"You should have brought him here to breakfast," said the Colonel.

"I do not think, sir, that he will take any breakfast this morning," answered Josia, covered with confusion, and taking a second bottle of Seltzer.

Madame Slavsky laughed. "You do not look very joyous this morning, Josia: what disaster has befallen you?"

"Josia has been working very hard on your account," said the Colonel, moved by a kindly impulse; "and I think that he is really tired out."

Madame Slavsky cast a glance of commiseration in the direction of the young secretary. Let us here take occasion to remark that this was a little way she had. She was always lavish of her grateful looks and smiles, and always had the air of being profoundly attentive to every word addressed to her, when often in reality her thoughts were wide away.

Breakfast over, Madame Slavsky hurried off with a step which was possibly somewhat heavy. She had shopping to do, she said. The Colonel retired with Josia to look over accounts and unpaid bills.

Ratier on this same day had gone out at a very early hour; the dissipation of the previous evening had in no way disturbed him; his nature was not self-indulgent, and his tastes never led him into excesses. He was never better in health or spirits than when he issued from his door, and breathed the fresh April air. He walked off briskly in the direction of Montmartre, and with each step he took he seemed to drink in health and strength. The small hand-carts loaded with bouquets, hyacinths, and wall-flowers were met at every turn. The women who drew them did not seem to think of their weight, for the day was delicious, and their sales would be large. Ratier

selected a lovely bunch of white lilacs, and in the joy of his heart gave the woman ten sous over the price.

"Take care of that piece," he said, with a laugh; "it is a luck-penny and has a hole in it."

"I will keep it, sir, and good luck to yourself," answered the woman; and as Ratier went on, she said, half aloud, "He is going to see his lady-love: it is easy to see that."

Ratier climbed the steep street under the warm April sun, which burned his brown cheeks, and reaching the famous *moulin* and smelling fresh *galettes*, he entered the shop, where his eyes fell at once on a row of golden cakes, hot and smoking from the oven. He selected the largest and handsomest, and went down the street on the other side of the hill whistling a popular air, and not in the least embarrassed by the flowers in one hand and the huge cake in the other.

When he arrived at that big building called the Château des Brouillards, he entered the court without asking for any one, and catching sight of some light drapery at the further end of the garden, he hurried on, and greeted a lady with a kiss on each cheek.

"Why, Ratier! where on earth did you come from?" exclaimed a handsome fellow of twenty-eight or thirty, who was sowing seeds in a hotbed. "It is good to see you once more. It is a most extraordinary hour for you to make your appearance, but you are welcome, as you know, whenever you choose to come. You will breakfast with us, of course?"

"It is precisely that which I intend to do!" said Ratier,

thrusting the flowers into the arms of the lady, and the *galette* into the hands of the young man. "And the baby?"

"The baby is well; her nurse is dressing her. What have you there?"

"A hot *galette.* Ah, Madame Féraud! ah, friend Jacques! how delicious it is here! I think your sunshine is brighter and warmer than in Paris, and—" He relapsed into silence, and looked about him with a look of half sadness.

"Has anything gone wrong?" asked Jacques, anxiously.

"Nothing at all, on my honor."

"But it is so very unusual to see you at this hour! and besides, without wishing to reproach you, do you know that it is six months since you were here!"

"Six months!" repeated Ratier, slowly; and then, with a sigh, he added: "six wasted months, I fear!"

He was silent, looking back on the past half year, and his eyes lost their gayety.

"And, pray, what put it into your head, Monsieur Ratier," said the young wife, cheerily, "to come here to-day?"

"I do not know—the necessity of seeing some honest people, I fancy—people who are not so stupid in their honesty—be it understood—as to disgust one with their virtue."

Madame Féraud disappeared to order some additions to her modest breakfast, and Ratier seated himself where he could inspect his friend's labors. Jacques Féraud had

been in the same class at college as Ratier; but on leaving there, their paths in life were vastly different. In such cases generally, early friendships are forgotten; but in this case it was different.

Féraud, totally without fortune, had gladly accepted a Professorship of Mathematics. It was a laborious position, and one which was of small pecuniary benefit; but, by degrees, he had succeeded in winning for himself a position. The families of those young men whom he had prepared for their baccalaureat recommended him to others who required coaching. He therefore had, by degrees, filled up his daily life with a certain routine of duties, which left him ample time for his own mental cultivation. Féraud, besides, was an inventor, and had taken out several patents, which had brought him some fame, and a very small amount of money.

Nevertheless, when his lessons were given, he daily turned his face homeward with a contented face and spirit. He had married a woman whom he adored, and who, among other merits, had neither dowry nor relatives. A little girl, two years old, gladdened their pretty home, and so occupied the mother's time, that she, when Féraud returned, was in the habit of saying, "already!" instead of "I thought you never would come!" as had been her greeting previous to the birth of the child.

Ratier watched this family with curiosity and respect. That they could live and bring up a child on four thousand francs per annum passed his comprehension. More than once he had entreated Féraud to borrow of him.

"No," he said; "for I could never return it."

"And what would that matter?" answered Ratier.

To Féraud it mattered a great deal, and he continued the daily struggle with poverty, from which he was destined to come out victorious. Ratier regarded him as the most extraordinary man of his acquaintance; and Madame Féraud was, in his eyes, an absolute angel.

"What have you decided upon?" asked Jacques. "Have you relinquished all idea of the stage?"

"I do not know yet—I cannot make up my mind—I shall see."

"But it seems to me that you should no longer postpone a decision. How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Twenty-eight! and not chosen a career?"

"Pshaw!" answered Ratier, "there is plenty of time! I have still a little more money to spend!"

"Jacques!" called Madame Féraud's sweet voice from a distance; and leaning from her window, she summoned the two friends to breakfast. They obeyed; and finding baby there too, they spent an hour in all sorts of absurdities.

"You sing still, Monsieur Ratier?" said the lady, at last. The cloth was removed, the child despatched to the garden, and they found themselves in the atmosphere of serenity created by coffee and cigars.

"Sometimes; but not often."

Jacques looked with astonishment at his friend.

"But what do you do?"

"I amuse myself!" answered Ratier, doggedly; "that is to say, I devote my time to various occupations, generally looked upon as amusements, such as rising late—scolding my servant—paying for dinners that other people eat—and drinking coffee which is all chiccory, and very unlike this, dear madame," he added, with a bow to his hostess—"playing cards, at which I contrive to lose a great deal of money—buying horses, and getting rid of them again at a dead loss—eating late suppers—saying foolish things, from nine to midnight, to the women I meet in society—and this is about all which I make out of life!"

Jacques shook his head.

"You were better than this, my dear fellow, in those old days—"

"To be sure I was," answered Ratier. "I made verses then—I worshipped the stars. In those old days, I was virtuous; but—I was poor! Poverty gave me a ferocious appetite, and now that I can gratify it—"

"You give yourself an indigestion," interrupted Jacques.

"Ah! my friend, I did that long ago. Behold!" said Ratier, throwing himself into an attitude, with one arm extended in an oratorical fashion, "behold a man who is weary of life—tired of pleasure—disabused of all illusions. If any one should apply a match to the top of my head, a blue flame would arise from my luxuriant locks—the vapor of the wine and the absinthe absorbed by my system."

"Nonsense! Eugène—do be serious," said the young

Professor. "I never know when you are in jest or in earnest."

"Because, my good fellow, I never know myself."

"You can tell me, I presume, why it is that you sing no more? After such long and arduous studies—"

"You see, Jacques," interrupted Ratier, placing both elbows on the table, "you see it is all my uncle's fault."

"Your uncle!—the uncle who is dead?"

"That one, precisely. Follow me, now, with attention. I was eighteen, and one rainy Sunday I was spending the day with my uncle. I began to sing that aria from William Tell—you know it?

"'O ciel, tu sais si Mathilde m'est chère.'

"The glasses in the room fairly rang with my voice as my uncle ran out of his library, clasped me in his arms, and exclaimed, almost with tears: 'Oh, Eugène! you will become the greatest of tenors!' I had never been to the opera. My uncle made me sing to him all day long, and gave me twenty francs to amuse myself with. Dear uncle!" apostrophized Ratier, "I am not sure that these very twenty francs did not close the gates of paradise in your face. However, on the following Thursday, my uncle came to the college for me, took me to see Duprez, who at once decided that I had a fine tenor voice, a *tenor di forza;* that Tamberlick was gone, and that—well! I was taken at once from my studies, and entered the *Conservatoire.* There I remained, studying hard, I will say of myself, for years; and just as I was thinking of making my début, encouraged and supported by my uncle

and his friends—all of them crazy about music—the poor, dear man died suddenly, leaving me all his fortune!"

"Well! what of that? That was no reason for giving up the profession you had chosen."

"But, if I had enough to live on without it, what was the use of my putting on paint and powder, Othello's black skin, or a coat of mail, and go on the boards to sing my heart out for the amusement of two thousand idiots, who would not care the next day whether I was alive or dead?"

"But Art and Fame?"

"Yes, yes; I think I have heard those words before. I simply put off my appearance until I was old and my voice bad—the public like such tenors best, it seems, and are disturbed by the novelty of younger ones. You see, now, what I meant when I said it was all my uncle's fault. If he had not desired me to be a great singer, I should have turned my attention in a different direction, and perhaps made my fortune honestly, like many another man, by grinding down other people! This was my uncle's first mistake; the second was that of leaving his fortune to me; for without the fortune I should have made my début, and received a handsome salary, I do not doubt. And now, what am I? Neither one thing nor another," and he let his arms drop on the table with a discouraged air.

"But," said his friend, laying a kind hand on his shoulder, "you can easily redeem the past—your fortune—"

"My fortune! That is a good joke. Why, my dear fellow, my fortune is all gone. Vanished like smoke!

About thirteen thousand francs, I believe, are left, and I hide them—I hide them from my very self. I deliberately lose the key of my drawer when my portemonnaie is nearly empty, and go about Paris with twenty francs in my pocket. I patronize omnibuses in these days. But my economies amount to nothing; or, in fact, when I have saved fifty francs I feel that I deserve a reward, and I immediately proceed to expend five hundred. I am nearly on the verge of ruin, you see!"

The husband and wife looked at each other in consternation.

"It is this abominable Paris that has done all this!" Ratier continued, rising and going to the window, from which could be seen the trees in the Champs Elysées and the glass roof of the Palais de L' Industrie, which glittered in the sun like a gigantic silver shield; "it is this monster, so beautiful and amusing, so venal and artificial, so vicious and infamous! but I adore it!" he added, tossing a kiss toward the cloud of dust which softly veiled the great city.

"But when you are penniless?" said the young wife, timidly, aghast at what she had heard.

"I have always the stage to turn to," he answered. "By great good luck, of which I have been totally undeserving, my voice is quite unchanged."

"But you are out of practice."

"Hush!" replied Eugène, "I have been a preposterous hypocrite, for I have never omitted a certain amount of work in every twenty-four hours, in spite of what I have told you."

"Do you mean singing?"

"Yes, my boy, I mean singing; I call that work—it is certainly not pleasure!"

The three friends sat silent for a few moments.

"Why do you not marry?" said Louise, abruptly, coloring at her own audacity. "You might marry some woman of fortune."

"Which is precisely what I never will do," answered Ratier, so gravely that his companions were startled. "I shall never make a marriage of that nature. A woman might do it, if her conscience did not forbid her, and if she had been badly brought up, but men rarely sell themselves in that way. No; that is impossible."

Jacques' eyes expressed his approval, but he said nothing.

"Well, then," resumed Louise, "marry for love, as we did!"

"And the tenor married for love!" cried Ratier. "Why, my dear lady, the basso or the baritone would feel it his duty to elope with my wife, while I was singing the part of Romeo with the prima donna. That would be a satisfactory piece of business to all concerned. No—I shall not marry for love, either! Besides, there is no woman whom I wish to marry!"

There was another silence, broken by a question from Ratier.

"How does one go to work to marry off a daughter?"

"Have you a daughter to marry?" asked his friend, with a smile.

"No; I have no daughter," answered Ratier, very seriously; "but there is a lady among my acquaintances who would much like an infallible receipt on this point."

"I have no receipt," repeated Féraud; "if I had, my fortune would have been made long since."

"As an inventor, you should turn your attention in this direction," said Ratier, as he rose to take his leave. "As for myself, it is quite time that I should return to *mes moutons*."

"What are your '*moutons*' just at present?"

"Ah! my friends, I have a whole menagerie on my hands just now, and among them a little white lamb, that I hope to show you some fine day. And now, good-bye."

And Ratier sauntered home through the Boulevard, and about five went to call on the Colonel. To his infinite astonishment he did not find Boleslas in his room, although Ratier had been informed at the office that the Colonel had not gone out, and the key was, moreover, in the door. Ratier was about to ascend to the attic, where Josia's room was, when voices assailed his ear.

"Ratier is a fool!" said Madame Slavsky; "you will never make him anything else."

"Ah! ha! so the dear Barbe has come to the fore, has she?" thought our young friend; "if I were not the most honorable of men this would be a fine opportunity to discover her opinion of me."

He knocked hastily at Madame Slavsky's door, and on hearing the conventional "Entrez" obeyed, and found himself in a tiny salon.

"We were just speaking of you," said his hostess, as she held out her hand.

"Saying something derogatory, of course?" answered the young man, raising her white fingers to his lips.

"By no means; you know that were quite impossible. I never speak of you otherwise than kindly."

"I should really like to know what she calls speaking ill of one!" said Ratier to himself, as he smiled and bowed to the little circle. Rémisoff was sulky, and sitting apart in a corner. The Colonel extended two fingers to the new-comer.

"How is this?" thought Ratier. "Yesterday he gave me his whole hand; and Barbe is here! Something has happened! Your arrival is unlooked for, madame," he said aloud—"but none the less welcome. And Mademoiselle Catherine?—"

"Is at Monaco, sir," answered the lady. "I go back in forty-eight hours. I merely came on to see my dressmaker, and make some purchases."

At this moment Ratier saw that Rémisoff had his watch. He glanced at Josia, whom he discovered to be equally fortunate. And the Colonel's chain glittered conspicuously upon his velvet vest.

"She has certainly broken the bank," he thought, with a sudden ray of inspiration.

"You will dine with us, of course, gentlemen?" said Madame Slavsky, amiably.

"Yes; it is just that," thought Ratier; "and Rémisoff, whom we agreed to amuse—poor fellow! he looks dull enough now."

While the young men overwhelmed their hostess with thanks and compliments, the Colonel invited Ratier to go to his room with him; and there opened a drawer, and solemnly handed the astonished young man the famous securities in their silk handkerchief.

"Good heavens!" cried Ratier, on seeing them, "I have been cheated!"

"Cheated!" said the Colonel, highly offended. "Count them, young man. They are all there."

"I know that, very well; and that is precisely why I am cheated. I flattered myself that I was forever rid of them; and here they are brought back to me! What the deuce am I to do with them?"

With a majestic wave of the hand, Boleslas signified that it was no concern of his.

"You do not imagine, do you, that I am going to carry this package about the world any longer? No, Colonel, you have these wretched papers; pray keep them."

"They are in safety here, to be sure," answered Boleslas, contemplatively.

"Yes, I know; and we may need them again some day."

The Colonel smiled, with the lofty superiority of a man who has plenty of money in his pocket.

"For the moment my affairs have taken an unexpected turn for the better," resumed the Colonel.

"Your sheep have come to life again?—"

"Precisely," answered Boleslas, witheringly.

"Old liar!" thought the disrespectful Ratier; "the

beautiful Barbe is at the bottom of all this, and I must find out what it means. I congratulate you heartily," he said aloud; "and Josia must be enchanted at the ultimate success of your company."

"Pray do not mention it to him," said the Colonel, uneasily.

"Ah, yes! I understand—excess of emotion—his extreme youth—recent dissipation, and all that sort of thing. I will not offend by any indiscretion. And where are we to dine?"

"Here, in the hotel, in the small dining-room, at seven."

"Good! I will go and tell them not to put their Bordeaux in the oven, nor their soup in the refrigerator."

The circle of—friends, shall we call them?—had finished their dinner; all stiffness had vanished. Josia, notwithstanding his morning's repentance, and the admonition of the Colonel, had a bright color on his usually pale cheeks; but this was the fault of a punch concocted by the Colonel for his guests. Rémisoff was in a good humor—a mood so rare that Ratier borrowed his host's glasses to examine him more closely. The charming Barbe, who was by no means above the enjoyment of a good bit of gossip, recounted the adventures of a Greek Count with a Spanish Marquise; and the Colonel drank in each word uttered by his friend, with all the delight of a cat lapping cream after having been for a long time confined to Parisian milk. Ratier—always a keen observer—listened and looked on, extremely amused—not so much at what

was said, as at what they imagined they were adroitly concealing.

The story had just reached its climax, and everybody was laughing heartily, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and a fresh young voice exclaimed, gayly,

"What a good time you are all having here! and I left in solitary confinement way off at Monaco!"

The guests looked around, in astonishment. Upon the threshold stood Catherine Slavsky, tall, stately, all pink and white, like a sweet pea; her arms crossed with the air of Napoleon at Austerlitz, and regarding this startled assembly with eyes sparkling with fun and mischief.

She was so bewitchingly beautiful, so frank in her ill-behavior—her youth and her honesty offered such strong and cruel contrast to the faces around the table, which were heated by the dinner and by wine, and brutalized by the low sentiments aroused by Madame Slavsky's tale—she seemed, in short, a person from another world, suddenly dropped into this atmosphere of immorality and corruption—that Ratier half rose to his feet, with the words, "Do not come in!" upon his lips.

She entered, nevertheless, followed by her Irish governess, who—as broad as she was long—was at this moment a mere moving mountain of wraps, bags and umbrellas, with neither form nor figure.

"Upon my word, it was a nice thing to do!" said Katia, in her clear, ringing voice, with a profound contempt for *les convenances* and the presence of strangers. "Mamma breaks the bank and rushes off, leaving me in pledge at the hotel."

"Catherine!" said Madame Slavsky, in a severe voice.

The culprit went to her mother, kissed her hand without any especial indication of affection; received from the Colonel a paternal kiss upon her brow, which caused Ratier to frown fiercely; then glancing around the table with infinite aplomb, finally took a chair herself from against the wall and placed it between her mother and the Colonel. As soon as seated she turned to the waiter:

"Bring some dinner to Miss Amroth," she said; "she is dying of hunger."

"And for yourself," said the Colonel, cordially; for he really loved this child, whom he had seen grow up.

"What is it you are eating? Dessert? And it is all gone! Waiter, bring me some chocolate and some biscuit. I adore chocolate."

Madame Slavsky did not speak; her silence was indicative of a great storm brewing. Boleslas held out the olive branch.

"And how happens it, you little plague, that while we supposed you at Monaco, you were calmly coming down upon us in this way?"

"Wasn't it a good idea, though? But have you no compassion for a young lady of good family, left at a hotel under the sole protection of a Miss Amroth, deserted by her mother who has suddenly disappeared—no one knows where, or why."

"But you did know where, or you could not have found her! And how did it come about?"

"After the simplest fashion—as I will tell you. My

marriage you see was broken off. Did you know that? Well, of course, after that there was no reason to remain at Monaco. Mamma spent the whole day before she left at the rooms; came back late, and just said she was going away, and went! Of course that evening was intolerably dull. I had got tired, you see, of those everlasting harpists, and street singers, and of Santa Lucia, and all those other Neapolitan songs. And as I sat at the window, I heard two gentlemen talking as they went past; one said: 'Yes, she broke the bank, and has gone to Paris.' 'Who broke the bank?' said the other. 'I have forgotten her name; but it was a Russian lady.' And then I understood the whole affair; and to tell you the truth I was not pleased, for I did not think that I had been very fairly treated, for I wanted to play too. And I think if I could have gone to the rooms that very moment, that I could also have broken the bank—"

"Which I did not do," interrupted Madame Slavsky, who sat with compressed lips, the very personification of outraged maternal dignity.

"I beg your pardon, mamma; but so I heard. And at all events I could not play, for you know I must have had two francs at least to do that, and neither Miss Amroth nor I could raise more than thirty-eight centimes!"

The Colonel looked pityingly at the poor child who could not play because she was without money.

"And so, mamma, I went off to bed and cried all night!"

At this moment the waiter appeared with some soup for

the governess, and the chocolate for Katia, who continued her discourse as she nibbled her biscuit.

"The next day I woke at a frightfully early hour—for as I tell you I had slept but little. I went down-stairs to see if there were any letters, and what did I behold—a great envelope with five red seals! I took it, carried it off, and opened it."

"My letter!" exclaimed Madame Slavsky and the Colonel, simultaneously.

"Yes, your fortunate letter. And what did I find in it? Three crisp bank-notes, each for one thousand francs. Then what did I do? Any one can guess that riddle, I fancy. I rang for the bill—it was for two thousand one hundred and fifty-seven francs and some centimes. Just to think, that for twelve hours I had represented that amount of francs! I never held my head so high, or supposed that I was worth as much as that. And alas! I never shall be again. When once that bill was paid, I took the first train, and here I am. And Catherine Slavsky does not mean to return to Monaco in a hurry!"

She drank her last drop of chocolate, and as the waiter took away Miss Amroth's soup plate, she said to him, over her shoulder,

"Some more chocolate and biscuits."

"I cannot understand why they allowed you to take a letter at the hotel which was not addressed to you," said Madame Slavsky, still intensely annoyed.

"Oh! mamma, they knew very well that it contained money. And they hoped that their bill would be paid!

They knew that they stood a better chance than if they waited for your return!" she added, innocently.

Ratier smiled.

Her mother made no reply.

"I am filled with admiration," said Ratier, "that mademoiselle did not take advantage of the money she held in her hands, and go to the roulette table."

"To be sure!" exclaimed Katia, regretfully; "and I never once thought of it! What a pity! I was so indignant at being left there all alone, that I had but one idea: to come to my mother."

The second cup of chocolate now appeared, and the young girl applied herself to it with considerable earnestness. Josia had never taken his eyes from her face since she entered the room. Ratier had more than once addressed to him a suppressed admonition, but all in vain. Suddenly Katia looked up, and addressing the secretary, said:

"Well, Josia, you have not changed much since I saw you—"

"But, mademoiselle—" stammered the young man.

"You will always look young, I fancy. Now Monsieur Ratier is different; I doubt if he ever looked anything but old."

"That comes from my wisdom, mademoiselle," said Ratier, with an important air. "It is only age that brings wisdom, therefore wisdom must bring age."

Katia looked at him with a smile, and returned to her chocolate, which she hastily finished. Pushing her cup away, she made an attack on another of the guests.

"You should look more pleased with the world, Monsieur Rémisoff. You are rich—"

"And handsome," said Ratier, in a low voice.

Catherine drew down the corners of her mouth, but ventured on no more distinct a contradiction of this assertion.

"You are absolute master of your own life," the girl continued, "and yet you always look discontented."

"Mademoiselle, it is because you have never yet deigned to smile upon me!" said Rémisoff, completely astonished at his own brilliancy.

Ratier opened his eyes wide, and pulled a note-book from his pocket.

"What are you doing?" asked the young girl, with the air of a belle encouraging rival adorers.

"I am making a note of Rémisoff's clever speech. It is the first he ever made, and is, I hope, the harbinger of many more. Such things must always be preserved."

Rémisoff cast a furious glance at him, which Ratier met with a placid, innocent smile.

Madame Slavsky now rose—which was the signal for the men to go and smoke, while the ladies installed themselves in their small salon. The chronicles of the hotel have preserved no record of the scene between Catherine and her mother that evening; but perhaps such scenes are no uncommon occurrences in a hotel.

All now was going smoothly with the Slavsky and Boleslas coterie. Josia had received the deficiency in his salary. The hotel bill was paid, and another was quietly growing.

We have often noticed the ease with which Russians accustom themselves to the place of residence to which mere chance has originally conducted them. The cuisine may be inferior, the service negligent, the rooms expensive and inconvenient; but if the hotel be in a desirable quarter of the city, they will never take the trouble to change. It is the same way on a railroad: they submit to almost any inconvenience rather than change to another car.

This peculiar tenacity of disposition, of course, is developed in a still stronger degree, when their first selection happens to have been a fortunate one. For fifteen years the Colonel had frequented the Hôtel de Bade, and desired no other Eden. Up to this time, too, Madame Slavsky had shared—we will not say this nest—but this hospitable branch—whenever she had made her brief but frequent visits to Paris. But a week after this last arrival from Monaco, she decided that to reside in a hotel, and to marry her daughter, were two things utterly incompatible. Hotel life in Paris is inimical to all domesticity. How could she present Katia to her few friends? How receive them in the common salon of the house? Madame Slavsky discussed this one day with the Colonel.

"You see, Boleslas," she said, "it would never do. And Katia too has such a way of appearing just when she is least expected. Just now, when I thought her a mile away, she dashed up the stairs crazy to buy a dog, which had been offered to her on the Boulevard. She came very near finding me entering your door! It is really most annoying!"

This conversation took place in low tones in Boleslas' room one lovely afternoon toward the end of April.

"It is annoying, indeed!" sighed the Colonel. "She really must marry."

"Must marry!" cried Madame Slavsky. "That is just the point I desire to make! Of course she must marry. But it is little use for me to find desirable husbands for her. I find them, but somehow or other they fail me at the last moment."

"May it not be," said the Colonel, slowly, "that Katia is secretly opposed to these suitors?"

"No, indeed! She is not to blame. Poor child! she has plenty of faults, but I have never heard her make a single objection to one of these matrimonial projects. You remember the first one that was proposed, Colonel, four years ago; that German Count, you know?"

Boleslas nodded mechanically; his nod signified, "I know," or "I do not know," as his companion pleased.

And she pleased to take it as meaning that he knew.

"Well, then, this gentleman was neither good-looking nor agreeable. He was wealthy, or at all events appeared to be so; but really, there was not one point of sympathy between them. Nevertheless, when I said one day to Catherine, 'This is your fiancé,' she answered quietly, 'Yes, mamma!' and not another syllable on the subject did she ever utter."

"And when the marriage was broken off?" asked Boleslas.

"She was perfectly acquiescent. I was thankful when

the affair was brought to a conclusion. His title was by no means an old one. In fact, I heard that it was given to him for his success in the manufacture of a certain kind of sausage. So, on the whole, I feel that we had an excellent escape."

"But on what pretext was this marriage broken?" asked Boleslas.

"You surely remember, for it was you who attended to it."

"Forgive me, my beloved friend; but you know that my memory is so poor—"

Madame Slavsky shrugged her shoulders disdainfully. The Colonel's treacherous memory had cost her many a pang.

"It was on account of the dowry. He wished it paid down at once, while Monsieur Slavsky insisted upon paying it as income."

"Ah! to be sure, I remember! And then other persons came forward? —"

"I should think so! First there was little Bérendief; he drew back because a shower came up one day when we were out walking together. Katia wished him to carry her across the street, so that she should not wet her pretty little slippers. I honestly believe that the poor fellow had no force of character whatever: she had twice as much as he. Well, he refused; she got very angry; he was very impertinent, and I was obliged to say so to him frankly, and we parted. This was at Kreuznach. Then at Kissingen there was that Vermiral—and to tell the

truth, I really cannot tell what the trouble was there—I think it was something about the trousseau. Then there was Renes and Merentzof, and Braccioli; I told you about him—"

"Yes, I remember; but the other, Merentzof?"

"That was a most silly affair. When he ascertained that Katia had been promised to three or four persons before he appeared, he was frightfully angry, and we had a most disagreeable scene; but Braccioli came to me with proposals that very day, and everything else was forgotten. All went well for a time. I shall always regret the Braccioli rupture, which was Katia's fault, undoubtedly. He was a thorough gentleman, with a magnificent position, a fine fortune, fine figure, face, and manners. I shall never see his like again."

Madame Slavsky sighed, and the Colonel followed her example. "But Katia!" he said, anxiously.

"Katia for once seems disturbed. She begins to realize that it is not the thing to be publicly affianced, and then to appear again in public alone with her governess like a little girl. In a place like Monaco everything is known—you can see that by Katia's story about my having broken the bank. After all, Paris is the only place in which one can be let alone, to live in peace; and I mean to remain here some time."

The Colonel kissed the lady's hand affectionately, and thanked her for this delightful idea.

"I think," continued Madame Slavsky, "that I ought to make a sacrifice for Katia. I shall take a furnished

apartment, engage a maid, and notify those of our friends who are in Paris that I am here. The expense will be considerable, but I trust that the result will be satisfactory."

"And you will leave this hotel!" said Boleslas, in a plaintive tone.

Barbe looked at him with an expression that was at once tender and laughing.

"I am not going very far," she said. "You can come and see me constantly; for are you not my oldest and best friend?"

"And Katia?"

"You bore me intolerably about Katia!" cried Madame Slavsky, entirely out of temper. "It is to be hoped that she will soon marry and be out of our way. The essential thing now is to find a desirable apartment."

"Josia will attend to that," said the Colonel, completely crushed.

And at dinner Josia received his instructions to find quarters on the second or third floor, near the Arc de Triomphe—or the new Opera House—or the Rue de Rivoli.

"And see, Josia," added the lady, "that the furniture is fresh, and above all, remember that the rent must not be dear."

Josia had done many things since fate had attached him to the Colonel's service, but it was a new task that he was now called upon to undertake. Furnished apartments were entirely out of his line. While deliberating on this point, Katia tapped his arm lightly with the end of her parasol and said, in a dictatorial voice:

"And be sure, Josia, that there is a pretty little room for me."

At the idea of seeking a nest for Catherine, the poor youth was inspired with such enthusiasm, that he would gladly have rushed forth that moment without waiting for the conclusion of dinner; but a second consideration deterred him, and as he ate he saw in his mind's eye, dainty rooms of all colors, blue and pink, with huge mirrors and with none at all, with large windows and with small, all delightful, but far inferior to Catherine's merits.

After dinner, from which they rose at an early hour, Madame Slavsky proposed to take a turn in the Palais Royal. In the soft damp air of an April evening the party of four went through the quiet streets at the hour when all Paris is dining—when the omnibuses were running at longer intervals, and the carriages stood in rows at their stations, while their drivers were in the wine-shops.

What a delightful hour it is! Night is slowly coming on, but it is yet too early to light up the shops. In the jewellers' a lamp at the back flashes upon a diamond or on a sapphire, reposing in its blue velvet case; dozens of bangles glitter as they hang on the long arm of polished brass. The services of Christofle assume strange shapes; a salver resembles a buckler, forks look like dangerous weapons. At Braquenie's, Rue Vivienne, where old tapestries are displayed, the sleeping beauty, lying on her gobelin bed, looked like a real person, surrounded by curtains with strange black figures on a gold ground; and finally, in the streets the long rows of gas-lights are

beginning to stretch out like a string of beads broken and running in every direction. The approach of the man who is lighting them, and his placing the ladder at the post by your side, restores you to the practical reality of the scene.

Our four friends loitered down La Rue Vivienne; and Josia, with Katia's shawl on his arm, and the light muslin dress of the young girl blowing against him from time to time, moved as if in a happy dream. He vaguely noticed the tapestries as they passed the shops where they were exhibited, and said to himself that they would be pretty in Catherine's room. Then the flower-stand on the corner attracted his attention, and he stopped to purchase a bouquet for the young girl. This happy idea lost him his companions, however, and as he came out from the passage he stood utterly bewildered and forlorn, with his bouquet in one hand and the shawl over his arm, looking much like a dog that has lost his master. At this moment he received a hearty slap on the shoulder, and a well-known voice said:

"My friend, you seem to be in trouble!"

Josia started, and Ratier laughed heartily.

"I went to purchase a bouquet," stammered the poor youth, "and then—"

"Very well, my lad, follow me; we will soon find them. I will tell you once for all how to find missing Russians in this Palais Royal. If it rains they are inside the Café de la Rotonde taking chocolate; if it is pleasant they are outside the Café de la Rotonde eating ices. Am I not right?" Ratier exclaimed, in a few moments.

And in truth the young man's predictions were verified, for they found their party seated, and the waiter was just serving them with ices. Ratier slipped into a chair next Catherine, and was soon embarked in a merry conversation with her. Josia, charmed to see the girl so gay, looked at her admiringly, and forgot to eat the ice which was melting before him. He felt no pang of jealousy on seeing the ease with which Ratier monopolized the lady of his thoughts. Josia might be saddened, but not angered or jealous. Jealousy implies a certain pretension to the preference of the beloved object, and Josia had relinquished all such pretension.

By degrees he ceased to hear the words of the conversation. Catherine's voice soothed him like music, and he began to build a room for the young girl in which she would be lodged like a princess.

"You will never make me believe, mademoiselle," said Ratier, "that you did not go to the roulette table for the express purpose of annoying the Marquis Braccioli."

"Why should I have taken that trouble?" answered Catherine. "He was by no means interesting enough to inspire me with the desire to tease him!"

"Did you never tease him, then, merely to amuse yourself?"

"Why should I?" repeated Catherine. "I reserved that amusement until after our marriage!"

"Precisely!" said Ratier. "You are endowed, mademoiselle, with marvellous wisdom!"

The Colonel and Madame Slavsky were seated a little

980374

apart, engaged in an animated conversation in the Polish language. The young man saw that the very existence of Katia was forgotten by them. Josia was dreaming.

"Was the Marquis agreeable?" resumed Ratier, in an indifferent tone, as he took up the girl's fan.

"Agreeable? He? He was horrid!"

"Your opinions, among other merits, have those of decision and brevity," said Ratier, laughing heartily.

Catherine shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"He was a pedantic, opinionated goose," she answered, disdainfully. "A man who thought it no worse to gamble than to murder. He put on the most intolerable airs on the subject. Now I just wish to ask you, Monsieur Ratier, if it is not as natural to like cards as it is to breathe?"

Ratier thought how strong was instinct; Catherine awaited his reply; as none came, she added, with evident anger,

"It may be that you too condemn every woman who touches a card. If this be so, we had best quarrel at once, and once for all!"

"By no means. You know that I am always as glad to play as any one—"

"Except mamma!" interrupted Catherine, eagerly. "I honestly think she plays when she is asleep, for she is always dreaming of the hands she holds."

"Katia, you are talking utter nonsense!" said Madame Slavsky, in her native tongue, for these last words had caught her ear. "Take care what you say!"

This injunction only inspired the young girl with utter recklessness. She drew her chair a little nearer Ratier's, and continued to speak, but in a lowered voice.

The gas-lamps were now everywhere lighted, except the outer row which surrounds the garden. The fountain was playing, its musical tinkle making charming music, and filling the air with that peculiar dampness which is so suggestive of the country—frogs, weeping willows, running brooks, and so on. An odor of blossoming lilacs was wafted on the soft spring air from the Gardens of the Tuileries. The usual crowd was beginning to assemble, but every one seemed to be busy with his own affairs.

Ratier, satisfied that no attention was being paid to them, said in a low voice:

"You do not regret your Italian Marquis then, it seems; but up to these times, among all those persons who wished to devote their lives to you, have you seen no one, whom to leave has cost you a pang?"

The question was certainly a bold one, and Master Ratier deserved a reproof; instead of which, however, he heard the simple words, breathed rather than spoken,

"No one."

Why did Eugène Ratier become at once as gay as a lark? Why did Katia grow as red as a cherry? The Sorbonne fails to teach the why of such things, and yet such instruction would be very useful!

"Then, mademoiselle," resumed the young man, "your fiancés have one and all, been equally displeasing to you?"

"I have never in my life been so happy, as on those

days when these various gentlemen have disappeared from out my life. The only marriage I cared about was the last, because the social position I should have obtained by it was so very brilliant. But after all the Marquis was stupid: by speaking to me as he did, so suddenly at the roulette table, he made me lose five hundred francs."

"Your fiancés have been unfortunate in displeasing you, it seems?" said Ratier, as he twisted her fan.

"Because they were idiots!" replied Katia, with great gravity.

"But," said the young man, looking her squarely in the eyes, "why did you accept them, then?"

The girl did not speak. A cloud passed over her fair face. She glanced toward her mother, who was not thinking of her; she was trying to hammer some idea into the Colonel's brain, a task both lengthy and difficult. No words can describe the look of contempt, shame, regret, and pity with which the young girl contemplated the pair. She hesitated, and then, as if yielding to an irresistible impulse, she gave utterance to a flood of long-restrained bitterness.

"You ask why I wish to marry?" she said, between her close shut teeth. "It is because I am a restraint upon those two persons; because I am in their way; because they are weary of dragging me over Europe in their train; and because soon I shall be looked upon as a faded and withered sample of 'daughters to marry;' because 'my father cares not a straw for me; and because my mother—give me my fan, Monsieur Ratier, you will break it!"

Josia, still in a dream, looked at the stars, and inhaled the fragrance of the flowers at his side, and constructed, with the gold in an unopened mine, a fairy château where Catherine would be lodged.

"Poor child! Poor child!" said Ratier, softly.

"I beg your pardon?" asked Catherine, drawing herself up with some haughtiness.

"I was speaking of your fan, mademoiselle; but it is in no danger in my hands. But as to yourself, mademoiselle, you have no predilection in favor of matrimony?"

"Why should I have? It would be simply to change the bonds which harass me. Life is a pleasant thing to look forward to for me! To be sure there is a convent, but I have no vocation for that life, and"—with a sigh—"I am yet so young!"

She passed her hand over her eyes as if to drive away some dismal sight.

"And what do you mean to do?" asked Ratier, in a voice that was too indifferent not to be feigned.

"I? What can I do? You have known me for three years, Monsieur Ratier. I seem to be as free as a bird; but in reality I am an absolute prisoner. In no one thing do I consult my own pleasure. I simply stand and wait, hoping that some fine day a wealthy husband who is not too utterly disagreeable will be found."

"He must be wealthy, then?"

"Of course. What is life good for without money? Is it not the lack of money that has made us all so uncomfortable? We owe everywhere, Monsieur Ratier:

we owe a hotel bill in every city you can name—Rome, Naples, Ischia, Interlachen, Kissingen, and Trouville. We owe our milliners and dressmakers here in Paris; the jeweller who reset some family diamonds my father sent me for my marriage. We owe our laundresses everywhere; to say nothing of amounts borrowed from General Thomine, Madame Satof, and to plenty more—to yourself, among others, I do not doubt."

"No, mademoiselle, not to me, I regret to say," answered Ratier, with a profound bow.

"Why do you say that?" asked the girl, with a frown.

"Because it would be very sweet to me to have earned the right to your gratitude, and—"

"You talk like one of those printed phrases we find among our bon-bons," interrupted Katia. "Mamma in that case would not like you as well as she does now, and I should simply hate you! I hate everybody to whom we owe money! Yes, I hate them! Does that astonish you?"

"Yes, somewhat. Surely it is not their fault?"

"Yes, it is! They lend, knowing very well that they will never see their money again, and that is why I despise them; for they take the best of care to repay themselves in other ways. They invite themselves to dinners, for which mamma runs in debt at the hotels. The men are polite to me, so polite that it amounts almost to insolence, and when I wish to treat them as they deserve, I suddenly remember and am compelled to smile, when, in reality, I would like to strike them!"

"Better days will come," said Ratier, as gently as if he were soothing a sick child. "You will marry."

"Yes—some idiot who takes a fancy to my face. Do you think I shall be any happier then?"

"You may meet some worthy man whom you will love—"

"No worthy man would marry me! I should never love any who wished to marry me. I should despise him!"

"I cannot see that he would merit your contempt because he finds you charming."

"If such a man married me, he would carry me off to the other end of the world!" muttered Katia.

"Well, what then?"

"I should hate that, you see," said the girl, confidentially. "I like society, the theatre, watering places, fêtes of all kinds; but, above all, I adore Paris! Dear Paris!"

"The theatre!" exclaimed Ratier, so loudly, that Josia started, and the Colonel looked round, and for five minutes struggled to find the broken thread of his discourse.

"The theatre!" repeated Ratier. "Why do you not go on the stage? You have a voice, too! You sing extremely well!"

"Well enough for a young lady looking for a husband; but not well enough for the stage. Besides, my mother would never consent."

"Have you ever asked her?"

"No; but I spoke of a convent to her."

"And she would not consent?"

"Oh! she made no objection; but I am not fit for such a life!"

Madame Slavsky here rose, and the Colonel was obliged to follow her example; while Josia, recalled to the practicalities of life, drew the chairs from out of the ladies' way.

"Good-night, Monsieur Ratier," said Katia, gently. The hand she laid in his, after the English fashion, was burning and trembling. He gave the quivering fingers a friendly pressure, and stepped back to allow the party to depart.

"Poor little thing!" he said, sadly. "Ah! she has forgotten her bouquet! Poor Josia! It seems to me that the world is full of people that claim our compassion."

It was by no means late, and there were fifty places where Ratier could finish his evening; but after a turn on the Boulevard, the young man went to his rooms, and retired at eleven o'clock, a thing which had not happened to him since he left college.

Before retiring, he opened his desk, and carefully counted his little hoard.

"Upon my word!" he said, "my funds are getting pretty low. To-morrow I will call on Pignotti, and let him try my voice. If one has a diamond, it is a good thing to have it tested every little while to see that its value is not diminishing."

The next day, therefore, Ratier might have been seen at about two o'clock coming out of Pignotti's. His hat

was placed lightly on his head, which was thrown proudly back, with the air of a conqueror. He looked so gay and so happy in the April sunshine, that more than one woman glanced at him with a sigh, as she thought of the husband or lover bestowed upon her by fate.

"A man as happy as that must be very agreeable," they said to themselves.

Ratier walked on with a step as light as air, and later in the day went to the Hôtel de Bade.

"Are Madame Slavsky and her daughter within?" he asked at the office.

"Yes, sir," they answered.

"Beg them not to go out, for a gentleman is coming to see them on important business, and wishes them to wait until he has seen them."

The young woman at the desk had been the victim of too many practical jokes at the hands of Ratier to be at all surprised at anything he might now say or do. She smiled slightly, as she rang her bell, and summoned a boy to take up the message.

Ratier rushed off, and soon appeared with a capacious landau which drew up before the hotel.

"Where are the ladies?" asked Ratier, as he hurried up the stairs.

"In the salon," was the answer.

Ratier thumped at the Colonel's door, threw it open —hustled Boleslas, who was half asleep on the sofa, into his overcoat, thumped a hat on his head, and dragged him off.

"Good heavens!" stammered the Colonel, winking like an owl brought suddenly into the full light of day.

"Hasten!" said Ratier, "no time to lose! Come on!"

They reached the salon.

"Go down-stairs and wait outside," whispered Ratier, mysteriously.

The Colonel obeyed mechanically. Ratier entered Madame Slavsky's presence.

"What a bore!" muttered that lady under her breath; but Katia, on the contrary, was quite radiant.

"Excuse me, monsieur," said the courtly Barbe, advancing, "we are expecting a gentleman on important business."

"I am aware of it," replied Ratier, deferentially. "I come from the gentleman in question."

The ladies both looked at him in surprise.

"Please come down-stairs," he said, ceremoniously.

"And now, ladies," he added, as he opened the carriage-door, "have the goodness to take your seats. Come, Colonel, we have no time to lose!"

The coachman had already received his orders. The ladies and Boleslas meekly obeyed theirs, and they drove off with great rapidity.

"What does all this mean, Monsieur Ratier?" said Madame Slavsky, in a stately manner.

"It means simply, madame, that we are on our way to the Bois de Boulogne."

"But the gentleman, for whom we are waiting—"

"Is your humble servant," answered Ratier, with a bow, and a theatrical wave of his hand.

"And the important business?"

"To tell you that the day was too superb to waste within doors. It is Saturday. There are innumerable wedding processions at the Bois, and we shall see much to amuse us."

Madame Slavsky felt it her duty to administer a reproof.

"Really, sir, this joke—"

"I could not help it, dear madame. The notion took me, and I could not withstand it."

Madame Slavsky smiled, while Katia laughed merrily under her white parasol.

"Do you not think it would have been better to ask our consent to this drive?" said Barbe, quite sweetly.

"But suppose you had refused, dear lady. Picture to yourself the state of despair to which you would have reduced me! By this plan I was sure of success."

The carriage rolled along the Champs Elysées; the sun shone through the tiny green leaves upon the trees; children were playing, nurses loitering; all was gay, fresh and bright. They entered the Bois de Boulogne, which only requires age to be quite perfect, for the trees there will not be a respectable size for another fifty years, when we shall all be dead and gone.

The glittering lake was covered with little boats and greedy swans. They passed this point and turned into a narrower avenue, restful to the eyes by reason of the shade, and fragrant and clean. Katia was very quiet. The girl, in fact, was very much worn by the winter's

excitement, and drank in the serenity and beauty of the day with intense delight. And this unexpected hour of rest was like an oasis in her hurried, wearisome existence. She involuntarily avoided meeting Ratier's eyes and was content with the mere consciousness of living.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "a wedding procession! That is delightful. They are sometimes so deliciously funny."

The procession was moving gravely, the newly-made husband and wife walking solemnly at its head. The bride wore a dress of white muslin, the first freshness of which was forever gone; but, with a wreath of orange blossoms on her head, and her veil drawn around her shoulders, she was still gorgeous to behold.

"She is either a cook or a chambermaid," said Ratier, "who has married a waiter in a restaurant. They intend to open a shop of some kind where they will fail in business. They will return to service, and will feel it their duty to repair their own misfortunes, by robbing their employers in the most systematic fashion."

Another procession appeared in sight, but this party did not appear to be so united. The families of the bridal pair had evidently quarrelled.

"Ah, yes," said Ratier; "the two mothers-in-law have had time to find each other out! and the bride's mother said to her daughter as they left the table, 'Poor child! if I had only known into what sort of a family you were going!' And the groom's mamma will never forgive madame's mother, because it is she who has all the money, and monsieur has nothing but his Greek profile and his moustache!"

Madame Slavsky smiled and shrugged her shoulders; and both smile and shrug were full of significance.

They said, "My poor young man, you think yourself cleverer than you are, but with all your wit you are a trifle vulgar, and too sarcastic. These people are not interesting to persons in my rank of life, and we care nothing for their quarrels and misunderstandings, and have no desire to hear them discussed by a young, middle-class Frenchman, who has dropped from the skies, and who is admitted among us merely because he has rendered a few trivial services to the Colonel." None of all this did Madame Slavsky put into words, but, in the most suave manner, asked Monsieur Ratier if, when he was married, he intended coming to the Bois.

"Most assuredly!" said Ratier, who instantly caught her meaning. "I am only a bourgeois, you know; and I shall follow the traditions of my forefathers. Unfortunately, however, my procession will not be long, for I have no relatives, save a cousin or two, of whose very names I am ignorant. But I have many friends, and these, with my wife's relatives, perhaps—"

"You think of marrying, then?" interrupted Madame Slavsky, feeling it incumbent upon her to enter into conversation with the young man who paid for the carriage.

"Do I think of marrying? Yes, madame, more than once, possibly! That is to say, if I should ever become a widower."

"You have the prospect, then, of making another fortune?" said the Colonel.

"Yes, my dear sir; the certainty, I may say."

"I shall be glad to assist you. You know that I have a thorough knowledge of business. I know how to start an enterprise."

"Yes, I am well aware of that. The Mutton Association proves the truth of what you say, Colonel. Unfortunately, however, no one can assist me in this matter."

The Colonel sighed, Barbe frowned, while Katia touched Ratier lightly with her fan, to warn him that he was venturing on dangerous ground. He colored high—with gratitude, of course.

"Here comes another procession," exclaimed Katia, to turn the conversation. "What have you to say about this one?"

The bridal pair walked close together far in advance of their friends. She did not look at their path. The girl, with downcast eyes, smiling and rosy, listened entranced to the young husband's whispers, occasionally lifting a timid glance to his face. He held tightly in his the little hand in its white glove, and talked with his lips close to her ear. Low as was his voice, she heard each word he uttered.

"Of these," said Ratier, looking at them with eyes full of sweetness and sympathy, "of these I have nothing to say, for they love each other."

Katia colored, and her parasol suddenly fell between herself and the young man.

"Good luck and long life to that happy pair!" continued Ratier. "But those people behind them are probably saying that she is a coquette, and he, a spendthrift."

"What vile hats seem to be the style this spring," said Madame Slavsky, meditatively.

Katia, after her usual fashion, made no reply.

The landau drew up, as was natural, at the Restaurant de la Cascade. After eating an ice, our party drove to the lake. There were crowds of people there, coming and going, and equipages of all styles. Madame Slavsky examined them all. Might not some one of them contain Katia's future husband? "The ways of Providence are inscrutable," thought Madame Slavsky, "and something may happen at any moment!" There were brown men and fair, stout men and thin, asthmatic and dropsical, decorated and not decorated, some who drove superb horses and others who drove shabby ones. But how on earth could any one distinguish the bachelors from the widowers, and both from the men who were married?

These last sometimes were with their wives, but more often with the wives of others. Poor Barbe said to herself that there should be a law compelling married men to wear a feather in their caps, or some other sign. But, on second thought, she decided that that would be rather an extreme measure, and somewhat hard on the men, and that it was best, on the whole, to adhere to the present régime, inconvenient as it might be to the mothers of marriageable daughters.

Ratier leaned back in his seat in calm contentment. An occasional word from Madame Slavsky elicited a gleam of sarcasm from him, but on the whole, he said to himself that he was too happy to bite. This pale blue sky, this

golden light, the tender green of the budding trees, and perhaps some thought lying concealed within the depths of his heart, tended to give him the air of a man who accepted life without cares or burthens.

"Look, Catherine," said her mother; "see that most remarkable equipage coming toward us."

Ratier, whose curiosity was one of his strongest characteristics, leaned forward to examine the vehicle. A large basket was mounted on two huge wheels, and drawn by a tiny black horse. A plank was fastened securely to either side of the basket, whose driver seemed to be perfectly satisfied with his turnout. Ratier laughed merrily, and lifted his eyes to a huge dog-cart and a pair of superb horses, decorated with cherry ribbons.

"Rémisoff!" he cried, "Rémisoff driving out Tattersall's groom! upon my word! And yet he is accused of anti-democratic notions! Was there ever such injustice? I must really congratulate him!" He rose to his feet, took off his hat, and stretched out his arm, while he fixed his eyes on the young Russian, who, startled by the gesture, looked up, and, strange to say, the customary sulkiness of his face gave way to a sudden look of eager delight. He even tried to stop his horses, but there was no place to turn, and he was compelled to be satisfied, for the time being, with a bow and a smile. "He smiled!" cried Ratier, "absolutely smiled! Ladies and gentlemen, are you properly impressed by my words? Rémisoff smiled, I repeat. A smile from him must be worth a great deal of money; at least, so I suppose, as he is so economical with them."

"He is a most excellent young man," said Madame Slavsky, with dignified reproof. "The Colonel has informed me of the services he rendered me—"

"And did the Colonel tell you, too, that he rendered them because he could not help himself?" interrupted Ratier. "But he is well enough, I have no doubt," he continued.

"And very rich, I believe?"

"Immensely; only twenty years of age, and one of the few great matches of the season."

Madame Slavsky, seeing her motives so accurately divined, colored angrily. Katia, on the contrary, looked with malicious approbation on the audacious young man. The Colonel launched headlong, with the want of tact which distinguished him, upon an enumeration of the financial merits of Rémisoff.

By this time the landau had gotten out of the line and turned towards Paris, and presently a loud snorting and champing of bits was heard; they were enveloped in a cloud of dust, and Rémisoff's dog-cart was by their side.

"I wish to pay my respects to these ladies," said Rémisoff from his elevated seat. "Colonel, will you ask permission from Madame Slavsky for me to call upon her? This is an unfortunate moment, perhaps—"

It was, indeed; for the horses dashed the foam from their bits upon Ratier's light-gray coat, which was covered with dust; but the Colonel, who was on the other side, and thus protected, saw nothing to complain of, and

Madame Slavsky smiled and bowed with all the genial grace of a mother with a marriageable daughter, who seems to see her way clear before her.

Permission was granted therefore, and Rémisoff turned his impatient steeds and went back to the Bois to dazzle other eyes, while the landau rolled toward the Arc de Triomphe.

"And Josia—where is he to-day?" asked Ratier, whose gayety had vanished—carefully rubbing the breast and sleeve of his coat with his handkerchief.

"Josia is looking for an apartment for us," answered Madame Slavsky. "Before the end of the week I trust that we shall be out of that frightful hotel."

"I do not see how the life differs much from that of furnished apartments after all," said Ratier. "You have the same inconveniences, and very few advantages. But you know best, of course, madame. I trust you will kindly accord me the privilege of calling upon you in your new abode."

There was no escape for Madame Slavsky, who ungraciously enough gave her consent.

"Just as she pleases!" said Ratier to himself. "I intended to ask her to dine—her and her Colonel; as to Katia, she does not dine—she drinks chocolate; but as she treats me like a dog, and shows herself unwilling to throw me a bone—even now, when I have just taken her to drive—she and her Colonel may dine where they please, and at their own expense. They would be sorry if they knew; for I intended to give them a very good dinner, which I shall instead eat entirely by myself!"

The three Poles stepped from the landau to the sidewalk, in front of the Hôtel de Bade. Madame Slavsky felt that she ought to invite Ratier to dinner; but this she did not choose to do. Boleslas, however, did not omit the courtesy. The young man declined.

"I am extremely sorry," he said, "but my evening is otherwise engaged. I will call in a few days, ladies, to ascertain the locality of your new abode, and shall do myself the honor of paying my respects to you there," and going back to his carriage, he drove away.

"I wonder where he was going," said Katia to herself, as she dressed her hair for dinner. In a moment she added: "What is it to me? I am ashamed of myself, really."

She then shed a few tears, and finally bathed her eyes in cold water and patted them gently with her handkerchief, on which she had lightly breathed. No one has yet been able to discover why it is that Russian girls have the idea that this is an infallible remedy for eyelids reddened by tears.

"I am an utter simpleton," she said, "and my nerves must be horribly out of order; for I feel one moment as gay and happy as a bird, and the next, sad as a tombstone on the seashore in November! and both moods are equally senseless. On the whole, I am too familiar with this young man, and he has altogether too good an opinion of himself. I shall change my manner toward him."

She went down to dinner, was late, and was lectured for her want of punctuality, and informed that Josia had found

an apartment in La Rue Merosmesnil, and that they should establish themselves there the next day.

Ratier, in the meantime, was struggling with his *Bisque aux Écrevisses*, and was much surprised to find it very inferior to the soup usually set before him. He reproved the waiter, and sent an admonition to the chef; but as the other dishes in succession were equally tasteless and unsatisfactory, he came to the conclusion that the fault lay with himself rather than with the chef, and so sent a second message complimenting him on the entrées.

After an excellent cup of coffee and a small glass of Chartreuse, Ratier lighted a cigar, and lounged away to call on Rémisoff.

This interesting person had also just finished dining. He yawned, looked at his watch, but preferred to loiter away the hour before the theatres opened, in the brilliantly-lighted dining-room of the hotel, rather than betake himself to the Tuileries with his cigar. On seeing Ratier he extended a limp hand.

"You think, perhaps, I have come to borrow money," said the young Frenchman, with no circumlocution whatever; "but you are mistaken. I heard the other day that you were a little cramped just now, and I came to ask if a couple of thousand francs would be of any service to you."

"Many thanks," answered Rémisoff, most agreeably surprised, "my remittances reached me this morning."

"I knew it," said Ratier—all to himself, be it understood—"or I should not have come!" Then aloud, he

added: "I may be able to serve you another time; for I know myself how very disagreeable it is to be in Paris, and unable to amuse one's self as one would like. I am always ready to serve you, however."

"You are rich, then?" asked Rémisoff, arousing himself sufficiently to sit up in his chair.

"No, not rich; no colossal fortune like your own. He likes to be flattered," thought Ratier, "so here goes: you, who can spend a thousand francs a day and never miss it, would doubtless consider me poor. I never spend more than sixty or seventy thousand francs per annum."

Rémisoff nodded as graciously as it was in his nature to do. He had always looked on Ratier as a young man without resources, who lived on other people. Poor Ratier! the contrary had always been the case; he had always held the purse, and kept the mouth open. Rémisoff now looked upon him as quite interesting, and condescended to thaw out.

"You saw my horses to-day?" he said.

"Yes—superb creatures!"

"I have not yet decided on buying them."

"They are enormous," said Ratier, gravely, "and must eat tremendously!"

This settled the point with the Russian. Though he liked to throw away money, he was nevertheless not without a streak of avarice in his nature.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "I have not closed the bargain. But tell me, was it you who drove out those ladies to-day?"

"How could you find that out?" asked Ratier, with profound wonder in his voice.

"I know many things without being told," answered Rémisoff, sagaciously.

"How clever you are!" exclaimed his guest. "Yes, it was I."

"And you dined with them?"

"No; I was engaged. The Colonel asked me, however."

"Madame Slavsky is a remarkable woman, is she not?"

"It depends, Monsieur Rémisoff, on what you mean by remarkable."

Rémisoff gnawed his moustache before he answered.

"I am told that she and the Colonel live on terms which—well—which are not precisely proper. That she plays cards by night and by day; that she spends oceans of money, and yet is in debt everywhere. That, in short, it would be quite impossible—"

"To have her for a mother-in-law?" insinuated Ratier.

"How the deuce could you know what I was going to say?" asked Rémisoff, bewildered.

"How could I know? Why, because you told me last year. You said to me, 'I should like to marry Mademoiselle Slavsky,'" answered Ratier, telling the falsehood with the most impudent effrontery.

"Did I say that to you?" asked the young Russian.

"Most certainly. How could I have known it otherwise? Think, and you will remember."

This reasoning was sufficient for Rémisoff.

"It was on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, one evening

about five o'clock," continued Ratier, his theatrical instinct at once creating the mise en scène. "It had begun to rain; we were standing under a tree, when you said to me, 'I should like to marry Mademoiselle Slavsky, but no man can stand the mother!'"

"Yes, to be sure, I remember now, vaguely; but I had forgotten it."

"How strange!" muttered Ratier, inaudibly.

"But, my dear fellow," resumed Rémisoff, "I have changed my mind."

"In what respect?"

"Well, you see I have no faith in all these pretended pretendants to the honor of this young lady's hand, for it is not reasonable to suppose that a girl pretty as Catherine is—for she is a little beauty—would let all these marriages slip through her fingers in this way without some better reason than any they seem disposed to offer. There must be something underneath, my friend."

"Indeed there is," thought Ratier, "it is the mother!"

"I am convinced that there is some little escapade or adventure which is kept secret, but which these men, one after the other, have found out, and which frightens them away."

The expression of Ratier's face did not change; its air of beaming good-nature possibly became a little more fixed.

"I should like to break every bone in his body," he said to himself. "Little beast! The idea of his daring to calumniate a young girl like that! He should be

flayed alive. You shall pay for this, sir, sooner or later, be sure of that!"

"Do you not agree with me?" asked Rémisoff, surprised at the long silence.

"I can only say that I never heard of any adventure, or of anything in any way derogatory to mademoiselle. She has lived in a most conspicuous way and has travelled all over Europe—"

"In search of a husband! Now this is what I have been thinking, that little Catherine would probably make no better wife than her mother; but for a temporary affair—What on earth is the matter?"

"A sudden cramp," answered Ratier, picking up a chair that he had kicked over. This unfortunate chair received a blow which was not intended for it. "Go on, excellent young man, with what you were saying."

"Yes, I was saying that for a temporary arrangement little Catherine would be quite adorable. Now I will tell you my plan: I intend to be very devoted to her, and overwhelm her mother with attentions; I will even lend her money—"

"How much?" asked Ratier, quietly.

"I don't know—five or six thousand francs, possibly."

"Is it possible!" said Ratier, full of open-eyed admiration.

"Yes, she is worth it," answered Rémisoff, with dignity.

"Who? the mother or the daughter?"

"The daughter, of course; she may indeed be worth more than that, but you know a second-hand umbrella never sells for as much as a new one!"

"How droll you are!" exclaimed Ratier, his eyes flashing fire. "And you expect to succeed?" he continued.

"Yes, I think so."

"My advice to you is to marry her," said the Frenchman, calmly.

"Put that notion out of your head then, for I won't do it!"

"You will keep me informed, I hope, of the progress you make?"

Rémisoff nodded in assent.

"Good-night," said Ratier; "as you have no need of my money I am off!"

"Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"To get rid of my money—to invest it at six per cent."

"In Russia we get eight."

"Unfortunately we are not in Russia. Good-night!"

Ratier had so much difficulty in finding his hat, that he did not see the hand extended to him by the Russian, but thrust his own deep in his pockets and departed.

The Tuileries' Garden was still open, but it was very dark there. Two or three pair of lovers were strolling about, and the fragrance of flowers was almost overwhelming. Ratier strode toward a tree and stumbled against a chair; he took it up and shook it violently.

"You miserable hound!" he exclaimed; "you invented that lie! You would buy Katia, would you? You would lend money to her mother at eight per cent., and Catherine shall pay the interest, shall she? Just wait a little, and you will find out what I have in store for you!"

Down went the broken chair to the ground. He folded his arms and contemplated it with satisfaction. Lost in thought he did not notice the owner of the chairs, who had hobbled toward him. He addressed her when he looked up:

"I have broken one of your chairs," he said; "what is it worth?"

"Broken one of my chairs?" cried the old woman; "one of my strong, good chairs? my solid oak chairs? How did you do it?"

"I took it for one of my friends," said Ratier, calmly, "and I simply crushed it to pieces!"

"Good heavens! he is mad! It is worth six francs, sir; that is what I paid for them."

"You paid no more than twenty-five sous, and here are forty. Good-night!"

The old woman pursued him with maledictions, and the few passers-by stopped to look on.

"Now," said Ratier to himself, "this is the way I am always served. When I broke the chair I could have walked off and ignored it, but I foolishly preferred to be honest, and this is the result."

The crowd increased under the trees. Ratier took a sudden resolution.

"Stop thief! stop thief!" he cried, and dashed off in the direction of the Seine.

Voices, amid the darkness, repeated the cry, and people began to run. Ratier kept up the shout, then suddenly doubled on himself and came back to the tree where he

originally had been, and which was now quite deserted, and from that point took a new start and walked quietly out through the gate.

"I was sure of it," thought the young man. "I knew I was not mistaken; I have seen it in his eyes each time he has looked at Katia. I have taken his measure now, and can use every precaution. I will find Josia, and see if I can get anything out of him!"

But Josia was not at the café which was his usual haunt. In vain did Ratier look for him; his absence was hardly surprising, however, since he was quietly established in the rear of a box at the Variétés, where he could see nothing but the ladies in front of him, and where he was quite happy in seeing the play reflected in Katia's expressive face.

During the entr'acte, Rémisoff, who had discovered them, came round to their box, but the lôge was very tiny and Josia was an obstacle to the young Russian's plans on this occasion.

Days passed on. When Madame Slavsky's trunks had been carried to her new quarters—when Josia had seen with a pang a second bed for Miss Amroth placed in the room he had selected for Catherine, which bed shut up one of the two windows, and consequently deranged the whole architectural economy of the chamber and caused all its prettiness to vanish—when the Colonel had formed the habit of dropping in regularly at a certain hour to call on his friend—when, in short, all their arrangements were completed, Barbe decided to pay some visits before pre-

senting her daughter to those few friends of hers who were residing in Paris.

We will not follow her on this eventful morning, and will but briefly touch upon it. By several ladies she was not received at all; by others with that cold and ceremonious politeness which signifies—"You have passed this threshold to-day, but it is for the last time." In some houses she was cordially received, but it was precisely those which she did not care to cultivate.

"When there are no thrushes, one must content one's self with blackbirds," says an old proverb. Madame Slavsky resigned herself, therefore, to blackbirds for every-day use, but longed for a few thrushes for extra occasions; that is to say, for those days when she intended to invite to her salon those wealthy young men whom, to be sure, she had not yet discovered, but whose acquaintance she was in daily expectation of making.

She suddenly remembered that she had formerly enjoyed the friendship of a very beautiful and fashionable woman. This friend had retired from the world in consequence of a "frightful catastrophe, which had struck her in her dearest affections;" at least, this was what the newspapers of the day had said.

As Madame d'Haupelles had renounced the pomps and vanities of this world, she was all the more able to lend a helping hand to Barbe in her present need. Only—would she do so?

To settle this point, Madame Slavsky one day determined to leave Catherine at home, and explore by herself.

She made a careful toilette: a robe of black faille, severely simple; a few folds and a few knots of black ribbon; a black hat, with a white feather and a bunch of snowdrops on one side; a jacket like the dress; a black parasol, trimmed with Valenciennes, and black gloves. What could have been better? A veil with small dots completed this toilette. For some little time Madame Slavsky hesitated between this and the mask of white tulle illusion; but she finally adopted the more becoming austere combination.

She ordered a coupé, asking for a black livery for the coachman, and then drove to La Rue de l'Université. Madame d'Haupelles inhabited the first floor of a house of most serious and solemn aspect. Her friend had found her address on the list of the lady patronesses of some great charitable enterprise, and expected something grave and respectable, but not to this degree.

In the court-yard a coachman, clean and freshly shaven, was exercising a pair of sleek horses. A groom was washing a coupé, black within as well as without, and whistling as he did so; but as no profane melody would have been endured within those austere walls, the groom whistled gravely and decently the Christmas *Venite adoremus.*

All this considerably disturbed Madame Slavsky. But it was too late to recede. A servant all in black stood ready to receive her card. "Madame had just come in; but she was very tired;" he did not know whether it would be possible for her to see any one.

The charming Barbe was shown into the salon, garnet

and black; and in a few moments the servant reappeared and conducted her to another room, deep violet in hangings and furniture.

Close to the chimney, where smouldered a huge log of wood, sat Madame d'Haupelles in a low chair. She half rose to receive her friend, but her weakness was so great that she sank back with an apologetic gesture.

Madame Slavsky took a seat opposite, with the light from the window full on her face; but, after all, not much light came through those heavy curtains. During an interchange of commonplaces she felt her face burn under the scrutinizing gaze of her hostess, which examination she could not return, inasmuch as her friend's face looked in the shadow like a mere gray spot amid her black draperies. Barbe would have given much to have been miles away. At last Madame d'Haupelles said:

"You are still beautiful, Barbe, still beautiful; while I am a mere wreck. But God's will be done!"

She sighed deeply and in sincerity. Her friend echoed the sigh as a matter of politeness.

"I wished to see you," said Madame Slavsky, in a voice that trembled slightly, "because you have always been good to me, and because we have always been friends. I said to myself that, in the difficulties by which I find myself surrounded to-day, you might be able to render me the greatest possible service. I speak to you, you see, with the utmost frankness. I therefore came to you to ask this service at your hands."

Madame d'Haupelles' faded eyes looked sadly at Barbe.

It may be that she had allowed herself to hope that her former companion in those old days of fêtes and pleasures had come to see her from affection and sympathy. If this had been her idea, she was quickly disabused of it, and listened quietly to the confidences which were to follow.

Madame Slavsky started forth then on the recital of all her woes. Her friend was already aware that her marriage had been a deplorable mistake; that Monsieur Slavsky cared for nothing but hunting and the pleasures of the table. He would never go out and was deaf to all the entreaties of his young wife. Finally this miserable existence of quarrels and tears, misunderstandings and misconstructions, had ended in a divorce, wherein Monsieur Slavsky had been entirely to blame.

"Or allowed himself to appear so," interrupted Madame d'Haupelles.

"He was entirely in fault," replied Barbe, the color rising to her face.

"He was unquestionably partially in fault, but not entirely so," replied the woman who was supposed to be entirely out of the world and its gossip. "I knew you well in those days, Barbe; that was the time when we were seeing each other constantly. Go on."

Madame Slavsky continued. She told her confidante how her child had grown up, how the father had refused to take Catherine, on the pretext that it was impossible for him to bring her up properly. "And this was true," said Barbe; "for, what with his friends and the milkmaids

whom he brings to the table, my child would have had a fine example!"

Under the scrutinizing eyes of her friend, the head of poor little Katia's mother drooped somewhat after this unwary remark, but she soon recovered herself. Katia, she said, had not yet been able to settle in life. The child, beautiful as she was, seemed to be bewitched, for arrangements for marriage after marriage, had been made and broken off.

Madame Slavsky was silent. Madame d'Haupelles said, slowly:

"Have you been able to preserve your child from the perils and temptations which we both of us know only too well?"

"I solemnly swear to you," answered Barbe, eagerly, "that Catherine is as innocent as a baby. She is headstrong and with a certain amount of recklessness, but she has never done one thing with which we could reproach her, or for which she would need to blush."

The tone was sincere, and Madame d'Haupelles felt that the mother was speaking the truth.

"You are still on good terms with Colonel Mariévitch?" she said, without lowering the voice in which she put this most embarrassing question.

"But," said Madame Slavsky, totally demoralized by the abruptness of the attack, "we have never—"

"Never ceased to be together," concluded the repentant sinner. "Very well; that is the reason that you find it impossible to marry your daughter!"

"Oh!" began Barbe.

Her friend checked her.

"No human being," she said, "seeing your daughter living in this way, with you and with him, would respect her sufficiently to marry her. If, out of love for her—for you say that she is beautiful—"

"Very beautiful—at least a mother—"

"Poor little soul!" interrupted Madame d'Haupelles, in a tone of profound pity. "Ah, well; if some man loves her enough to marry her, he soon discovers that you do not respect yourself sufficiently for him to respect you, and thence come all the objections—"

"Oh, Blanche!" cried the mother.

But her hostess would not listen.

"You are still beautiful," she said. "I told you so, when you first came into the room; but this beauty will rapidly fade now—you will soon lose the air of youth, which is the only possible excuse for the frivolity of your present life. Do you think that your daughter is ignorant of the equivocal position which you have made for yourself and from which she now suffers?"

"I hope that—"

"You say she is bright and intelligent? Then she knows all this as clearly as I do to-day. What income have you?"

"Twenty-four thousand francs from Monsieur Slavsky."

"And you spend eighty thousand, my dear, for you gamble—you always did, and that is not a fault which time usually corrects; you play constantly, and the Colonel furnishes you with funds when you lose—"

"Excuse me."

"This is the most charitable interpretation I can put upon your conduct," said Madame d'Haupelles, severely. "Your daughter loves you, possibly, but you may be quite certain that she does not respect you. How then can you expect that a son-in-law, who has no reason to love you, should behave or feel differently?"

"What am I to do!" murmured Madame Slavsky, bursting into tears.

Her friend sighed, but did not speak for some little time.

"Listen!" she said at last; "you came here to ask me to arrange a marriage for your daughter. I could easily excuse myself. I could tell you that I go nowhere, that I see no one, that my life is spent in tears, prayers and remorse; and this would be all true. Nevertheless I know that it is quite customary for friends to come to the assistance of mothers who are in trouble of this kind. I could therefore lend you my support—indirectly, of course—but there is one great obstacle in regard to doing anything for you—"

"And that?" asked Barbe, eagerly.

A look from her friend checked her, and her eyes dropped.

"What dowry has your daughter?"

"Half of our income. Her father refuses to give her the principal."

"Is he punctual in his payments?"

"Entirely so."

"It is no great dowry, but many a girl has married well, with far less than twelve thousand francs."

"Then you agree to aid me?"

"I agree to nothing until you have broken, absolutely broken with the Colonel. That scandal must cease—otherwise I should never presume to present you to those persons who alone have it in their power to assist you, for of myself I can do nothing, as you must see."

"But," suggested Barbe, "it is not necessary to state to these persons—"

"Do you imagine for a moment that when your name is heard that your story is not known? You have lived too much in the world for the world not to know all about you—all those persons too, who knew me years ago." She stopped and sighed; she controlled her voice and went on.

"You promise me then to break with the Colonel?"

"If you insist," sighed Barbe; "but it is a cruel sacrifice, and in my eyes a needless one, that you exact from me; but my maternal affection—"

"She will not do it;" thought Madame d'Haupelles. "Send me your daughter," she said, aloud; "if she is all that you describe her, I will see what I can do!"

Madame Slavsky burst into enthusiastic thanks, into tears and protestations of affection. All her Polish cajolery came into play, but unfortunately, her tactics were too well understood to be of much service.

"Listen to me," said Madame d'Haupelles; "I shall say nothing to you of remorse or of your unfulfilled duties. Natures like yours care little for such ideas—unless some terrible blow strikes them down—and yet few blows are terrible to women of your stamp. You feared a ser-

mon from my lips, but I shall preach you none, for my words would be thrown away. Remember, Barbe, what I now say: you will grow old very suddenly, after keeping your youth so miraculously, and when that time comes, you will not find the consolation that has been so precious to me, and yet I had more to deplore than my vanished youth and beauty."

She rose and accompanied her visitor to the door. As they passed a window, Barbe was literally appalled by the alteration in the face which she remembered as so exquisitely lovely.

"I am changed, am I not?" said Madame d'Haupelles, gently, a faint, wan smile flickering over her face. "But I prefer to be thus than as you are, and yet I am only two years older than you!"

"How can you live in so gloomy an apartment?" asked Barbe, suddenly, as she looked at the hangings which were almost funereal in the shadows.

"It matters little to me one way or the other," answered her hostess; "I have suffered far more in my ball-dresses, with my diamonds and laces, than in this sombre dwelling. At present I have peace, at least—and you, Barbe, I fear, will never win that priceless boon."

Barbe involuntarily shrugged her shoulders. This gesture seemed to say that she cared little, but suddenly remembering where she was, she looked more serious as she said: "Then you will permit me to bring Katia here?"

"No, send her to me. I suppose she has a governess?"

"Yes, something of the kind."

"Send her then, under her care; I prefer to see her alone. Remember what you have promised—"

Madame Slavsky sighed, pressed her friend's hand affectionately, then gracefully lifted her train and disappeared. She entered her carriage—she hesitated—should she go directly home or— She decided to make the Colonel a brief visit. "I must let him know, of course, what has taken place," she said to herself, apologetically.

On her way thither she carefully dried her eyes and arranged her veil. "That poor Colonel!" she said to herself. "It is indeed a great idea to wish to separate us! No, never in this world. I should prefer to keep Katia forever."

During all this time Katia too had had a distraction and had received a visitor. Ratier had selected that morning to call on Madame Slavsky. Perhaps the idea only came to him when he saw that lady in her coupé turn the corner of La Rue Saint Honoré, for he rang, only five minutes after her departure. Catherine was lecturing their one servant in the anteroom; her clear voice reached the young man perfectly through the thin, ill-fitting doors. His ring startled Catherine, who rushed into the dining-room with the words, "Not at home!"

The servant opened the door, and, considerably out of temper in consequence of the admonition she had received from her fiery young mistress, she uttered the solitary sentence, "Not at home!" before he could speak.

"My good woman," said our hero, with great dignity, "your manners are not what they should be; you should

say 'madame is out.' But it is not madame whom I wish to see: I bring something to mademoiselle."

The woman, taken by surprise, hardly knew what to say. She was afraid of another lecture, and mechanically looked toward the dining-room as if to receive some instruction. Ratier understood this involuntary movement, and turned toward the door.

"But, sir—" said the servant.

"I told you that I had something for your young lady, and I must see her as quickly as possible."

His hand was on the door, when it was thrown widely open, and Katia was seen on the threshold.

"What have you for me, sir?" she said, haughtily.

"A change has come o'er the spirit of her dream!" thought Ratier, as he perceived the forbidding countenance of the girl. "But I do not care: I shall administer my warning all the same."

He walked into the room, closing the door behind him, and going as far as possible from it and the servant on the other side. Katia followed him to the window.

"What have you for me, sir?" she said, with some little impatience.

"News!" answered Ratier, quietly.

Profiting by the absolute stupefaction she experienced and manifested, he placed a chair for her; she accepted it mechanically. He took another directly in front of her, and said, abruptly,

"How do you like Rémisoff?"

"Sir," said Catherine, with a stony glare in her soft eyes, "that is none of your concern!"

"I beg your pardon; it concerns me very much."

The girl looked at him angrily. But suddenly her color rose, her eyes drooped, and confusion and self-disapproval overwhelmed her. She should not have admitted this bold young man—she should not have allowed him to seat himself.

"Mademoiselle, it is precisely your opinion of Rémisoff which will justify me in meddling in your affairs, or will compel me to feel that I am taking a liberty."

"You are taking a liberty, I should say," replied Catherine, haughtily.

"You are unkind, mademoiselle," replied Ratier, feeling as if his face had been slapped. "I came to serve you, and if I have interfered with your affairs it is simply because you were good enough to confide in me, as I am sure you would not have done to every one—"

"Sir!"

"Not to Josia, for example; not that he is not worthy of every confidence, but what could he do? Nor to the Colonel, for he would hasten to betray you at once, for which he would not be to blame, for he was made after that pattern."

"I am waiting for your great news," said Katia, feeling that Ratier was entirely in the right, and that after her former confidences her present reserve was very strange.

"First, Mademoiselle Catherine, you must reply to me with complete frankness and loyalty. Believe in my sincerity and in my friendship."

She lifted her eyes. The manliness and honesty of the young man spoke in his face.

"I am your friend," continued Ratier; "for your sake I played a mean role the other day. I interviewed Rémisoff, and I assure you that it was a loathsome piece of business. I am ready to do far more than this for you; but I must first clearly understand that you do not look upon me as an intruder; otherwise, I depart, never to enter these doors again."

It was Katia's turn now to feel a strange sinking at her heart. Yes, she believed in him. She realized that should he depart from out her presence never to return, that life would be more unendurable than ever. She remembered that to him alone, of all the men she had ever seen, had she spoken with entire sincerity, and although her pride rebelled at the thought that he pitied her, that longing for sympathy implanted in the human heart was too strong for her. She murmured,

"Do not desert me!"

He seated himself as if nothing had happened; and she was at her ease once more.

"What do you think of Rémisoff?" he said, taking up the conversation just where their quarrel had interrupted it.

"I think very little of him!" she said, with a smile. "Is he worth any serious thought?"

"That depends. Your mamma—how does she regard him?"

Catherine shrugged her shoulders, and said in a low voice, "He is rich."

"And would make you a good husband, she thinks."

"Very possibly."

"Well, and what is your opinion on this point?"

Catherine moved impatiently, like a sick person in whom an old pain is once more awakening.

"If he offered himself, would you accept him?" persisted her merciless questioner.

"I would accept any one, I think, who would remove me from this place."

"If he were rich, you mean?"

Catherine colored, remembering that she had told Ratier that she would only marry a man of wealth. She asked herself why she had made this condition necessary, for riches now appeared to her comparatively worthless; but for this change she did not stop to ask herself the reason.

"Rémisoff is rich," she said, bitterly; "why not he then, as well as another?"

"He comes here, does he not?"

"Yes; every day."

"And is well received?"

"I am not very cordial to any one, Monsieur Ratier, as you ought to know," said the girl, half sadly.

"Your mother thinks that he wishes to marry you?"

"Of course; otherwise, why should he be so attentive?"

Ratier's lips were compressed. "How am I to tell her?" he said to himself. "In what words am I to express to her my honest belief that in a day of distress her mother is quite capable of selling her out-and-out, for five

or six thousand francs? That was the sum, I believe, named by the little beast!"

"You think, then, that he comes here with the hope of marrying you?"

"He may possibly come for Miss Amroth!" the girl said, with a gay laugh.

"Poor little girl," thought Ratier, looking at her with profound pity; her laugh being sadder to him than her tears. Suddenly he snatched both her hands, and holding them tightly, threw the truth in her face, like a dash of cold water.

"He courts you, Katia; he loves you, perhaps; but he has no intention of marrying you. He told me so with his own lips."

The young girl uttered a sharp cry, and tried to snatch her hands away and cover her face; but Ratier held them firmly, fearing that she would rush from the room, and that he could not follow her.

"He wishes not to marry you, but to buy you. I suspected it; but I compelled him to say it in plain words, and I give you my word of honor that this is precisely what he said."

Catherine grew deadly pale, shrinking from Ratier's eyes, as if she herself were guilty. She wished to die. It seemed to her that she could not live, after this cruel, deadly insult. Her eyes closed in mortal agony. Opening them, she looked at the young man with so piteous an expression that he snatched her to his breast, and smoothing her hair with one hand as tenderly as if she had been his little sister, he said:

"Be comforted, my child: no one but you and I will ever know this, and I am not a man—I am a mere faithful old Newfoundland dog."

During the four years which had just elapsed, it is more than probable that she had been the object of more than one similar intention; but thanks to her girlish innocence, she had never suspected it. She had lived amid corruption without a stain. She knew very well that horrible things went on about her, but that she could ever become an actor in such infamies had never entered her imagination.

The evil, therefore, done by Ratier, was enormous and irreparable; but this evil was accompanied by a great good: for, forewarned, she would thus escape unharmed from the snares prepared for her.

A slight noise was heard in the anteroom. Ratier placed Catherine on a chair, and went quietly to see what was going on. He found the servant attending to her household duties, with the most innocent air in the world.

"Will you have the kindness to make a cup of tea for your young lady?" he said, with an equally innocent air. "She is not quite well. Bring it to her here, as soon as it is ready."

The woman in great surprise went to the kitchen, while the young man returned to Catherine's side.

"What shall I do?" she said, faintly.

"This is my plan, and it seems to me a wise one. Let Rémisoff continue to pay his court to you for some little time longer; if he becomes audacious in any way, look him straight in the face, and say, 'When shall we be married?'"

"And then?" inquired Catherine, not understanding.

"Why then, as he does not intend to marry you, he will be naturally somewhat embarrassed. He will probably say to you that business or family matters prevent him from fixing a date. Then—but you must judge for yourself what to say to him."

"I cannot believe," murmured Catherine, "that he can be cowardly enough to insult a young girl. Suppose he should answer my question by saying, 'Whenever you choose.'"

"Then," answered Ratier, with a feeling like a cold hand clutching at his heart, "then he will be caught in a snare of his own weaving, or be conquered by your charms, of which he had but an imperfect conception, and then, mademoiselle, it will be for you to fix the day—an early day—and marry him."

He uttered these last words in a serious tone that was very unusual with him. Catherine looked at him to see if he were speaking in good faith.

"He has wealth," continued Ratier, "which you believe to be essential to happiness, and he will release you from your present life." He bowed, and turned to leave her; she timidly held out her hand.

"I wish to thank you, Monsieur Ratier, for your goodness. You are my best—indeed, my only friend."

Ratier smiled, half sadly, as he held the girl's hand in his for a moment.

On the threshold he paused.

"Do you know Pignotti?" he asked.

"Pignotti? No; who is he?"

"He keeps an Italian warehouse, and knows a vast deal about music; but never mind. Express to your mamma, if you please, my great regret at not finding her at home." The girl wondered if he really wished her to mention his visit to her mother, but Ratier looked toward the kitchen, and then added, so that the servant could hear, "And do not forget that General Thomine is in Paris, and resides at 111 Rue de l'Arcade."

He closed the door behind him just as the woman appeared with the tea-tray. Catherine quietly drank her tea and the soubrette's curiosity was ungratified.

At this moment Madame Slavsky was recounting the events of the morning to the Colonel; as soon as she alluded to the condition exacted by Madame d'Haupelles, the poor Colonel offered to go at once to the ends of the earth; and then there was a scene which it is not advisable to attempt to describe. Finally, she questioned him on the subject of Rémisoff.

"Do you think his intentions serious?" she asked. "Has he ever made any allusion to marriage, or to furnishing an apartment?"

"I do not recall his ever having done so," began the Colonel, cudgelling his faithless memory.

"It seems to me," said Madame Slavsky, oracularly, "that if he were thinking of marriage many trifles would indicate it, and he would naturally make inquiries as to her dowry. No, Colonel, I am not altogether satisfied."

"Shall I speak to him, my dear?" said Boleslas, eagerly.

"By no means," said his fair friend, laughing; "you would ruin everything; and now tell me something about business."

"Business!" said the Colonel, gloomily. "I have twenty-one thousand francs to pay in two weeks, and not the first sou toward it."

"What on earth do you mean to do?" asked Barbe, in terror.

"Did you not bring from Nice a large amount?"

"Of which precious little remains. My dressmaker refused to do anything more for us until every fraction of her bill was paid, which amounted to nine thousand and odd. I could, to be sure, have gone elsewhere, but I liked her better than any one else. Consequently I paid her old account, and now we have incurred another for two or three thousand, which must be paid before I can provide a trousseau for Catherine."

"A trousseau! Then is she to be married?" exclaimed the astonished Colonel.

"Of course she is, sooner or later. Good heavens! Boleslas, do not look so utterly wild and amazed. And as to money, it seems to me it runs away like water; I can't tell where it goes."

"How much have you?"

"Seven thousand francs," answered Barbe, promptly—she made no mention of three thousand which she had carefully laid aside for emergencies—"and until the first of July I receive no remittances from Russia."

"Let me have the seven thousand—lend them to me," said the Colonel, eagerly.

"But what am I to do?" replied Madame Slavsky.

"You can live on credit, whereas mine is totally exhausted; and you know if I pay these bills now, that I can open new accounts; otherwise all my creditors will pounce down upon me."

"But, my dear friend, my poor seven thousand francs will be of little use without the rest."

"I will find the rest somehow; Ratier will help me."

Barbe frowned. "I do not like your Ratier; he has a sarcastic manner and way of speaking that is intensely obnoxious to me."

"Well, there is Rémisoff," said the Colonel, submissively —he never argued.

"Yes, but if he means to marry Katia, it would be wiser, I fancy, to ask no money from him just now."

"Then, dear friend, you must make up your mind to lend me your seven thousand francs."

In vain did Barbe struggle; she finished by yielding; as the Colonel philosophically remarked, "Seven thousand francs, more or less, were of little consequence, because in any event, she had not enough to carry her on to the first of July." It was agreed that the Colonel should take tea with the ladies that evening, and that Barbe should then give him the money. Madame Slavsky then returned home. She found that her daughter and Miss Amroth were out walking. On their return, Katia was informed by her mother that she was to go the next day to call on a lady who wished to make her acquaintance.

"She will strike you, at first, as a little serious and melan-

choly, but she is most kindly disposed toward you. Try to lay aside for the moment your air of utter indifference, and make yourself as agreeable to her as possible."

Catherine, somewhat astonished at hearing her mother speak of having a serious and melancholy friend, made some remonstrance, which Madame Slavsky cut short by a reproof; on receiving which, Katia burst into tears, for since Ratier's visit in the morning her nerves had been all unstrung, and tears were now a great relief to her. Her mother lectured her, and Katia went off to bed without any dinner, alleging a frightful headache.

Rémisoff was coming, and Madame Slavsky was extremely embarrassed between the alternatives of showing Catherine with red eyes and not showing her at all. She had an inspiration, and sent off for the Colonel; they would play whist with a dummy.

The following day Madame Slavsky, in a fit of anger, dismissed her servant, which compelled the two ladies to get their own breakfast. Katia went to the nearest butcher for some cutlets, and was returning when she bethought herself of the bread. She then remembered that there was no wine. Light-hearted and gay, she went to the grocer's.

"Strange," she said to herself, "that it does so much good to cry occasionally, and how amusing it is to do one's own marketing."

Having ordered her wine—six bottles for a franc—Catherine was on her way home, when, in a fruiterer's window, she saw some red eggs.

"They ought to be much better than white!" she said, with a childish recollection of Easter eggs.

She bought a half dozen, and then a cool, fresh salad went into her little basket. A tiny cream cheese looked very good. But what should she put it in?

"If you had a cup," said the woman, "I would give you some cream."

Opposite was a huge china-shop. Katia ran across the street.

"Give me a common cup," she said, "one for four cents;" and then remembered that it was the first time in her life that she had ever made an inexpensive purchase.

The clerk handed her the cup, examining with some curiosity this beautiful young girl, who, never in the habit of going out in the morning, was dressed as for the Bois.

"Put the cheese in this," she said to the fruiterer, all out of breath, as she returned to the shop.

The woman obeyed with smiling alacrity.

"Look here, little kitten," she said, adding a spoonful to the regular allowance, "this cream is for you; you must eat it with your pretty little tongue just as Minette does."

Katia laughed gayly at hearing herself called "little kitten." She thanked the fruiterer and turned to go away.

"You have no mamma," continued the good woman, who was unperverted by contact with the servants of the wealthy families in the Quartier where she resided. "You ought not to go out alone: you are too pretty. You do not know what wickedness there is all about you!"

Katia bowed her head at this reproach, which was certainly undeserved by herself. She thought with a pang of

her mother's indifference, and was momentarily saddened. But when at the door she saw a wagon loaded with flowers, her gayety came back, and she purchased a great bunch of white hyacinths. Pressing the perfumed bells close to her breast, she slowly mounted the stairs, the cup in one hand, and the basket in the other.

"What have you there?" asked her mother, seeing her thus loaded.

"Our breakfast," said the girl, with a happy smile. "And here," she added, as she put her hyacinths in water, "is the month of May."

She moved about so lightly, with such gayety and activity, that her mother made a severe but very just remark.

"Yesterday you were depressed and miserable, and to-day you are as merry as a cricket. Ah! my child, how perfectly capricious you are!"

"How delightful it would be," answered the girl, "if we were poor, and compelled to wait on ourselves!"

"You think so? I beg to say that I am not of your opinion," returned her mother, sagely, as she went into the kitchen to inspect Mademoiselle Amroth's proceedings; who had been intrusted with the duty of cooking the cutlets, and who, like most inexperienced persons, was filling the house with an intolerable odor of burning fat.

After breakfast Madame Slavsky despatched her daughter and her governess in a carriage to La Rue de l'Université.

On sending in her name, Katia was introduced to the

pansy-colored salon, while Miss Amroth was left to the solitude of her own reflections.

Madame d'Haupelles' appearance produced a singular effect upon the young girl, who was instantly inspired with profound sympathy for the pale face and weary eyes, which lighted up slightly as she entered the room. And seeing Katia, the heart of her protectress overflowed with divine compassion for this graceful creature, whose future lot promised to be so hard a one.

In ten minutes' conversation Madame d'Haupelles thoroughly comprehended Katia's nature. And notwithstanding the cautious reserve with which the girl spoke of her mother, her hostess learned much of the irregular life they had led, wandering from hotel to hotel, from city to city, struggling to hold up their heads under the inevitable humiliations to which those persons are exposed, who, having no money, are yet determined to live as if they had a fortune. Madame d'Haupelles was certain that the girl was as innocent as her mother was guilty, and had lived amid evil without a stain.

While the young girl talked, less timidly with this pale, grave woman, than with many another of her mother's friends, Madame d'Haupelles said to herself that it would be a very difficult matter to marry this child suitably.

How, in fact, was she to present her to any ambitious young man, who expected in marriage to create new ties which would be of use to him all through his career? How should she in fact induce any man to think seriously

of her, who apparently had all the antecedents of an adventuress—who knew how to order a dinner at a restaurant—who had seen every opera bouffe, read all the books with which her mother amused herself, and which were certainly of not the most elevated character?

She comprehended also how so many prospective matches had come to naught. She understood how men, bewildered by her beauty, moved by her sweetness and her girlish vivacity, would at first forget or disregard the faults of the mother, but who finally saw with clearer eyes when, as future sons-in-law, they were admitted to the house on a familiar footing, and realized the utter impossibility of closer relations with a woman like Madame Slavsky. Madame d'Haupelles knew enough of the world and of human nature to be quite certain that her old friend would not break with the Colonel. What in that case would become of Catherine? Only a convent was open to her, where suitors, if any came, would be received in the parlor for fifteen minutes at a time. It might necessarily come to this. But when she made some such suggestion to the girl, Katia clasped her hands imploringly.

"Ah! dear madame, it is impossible. I should die in a convent."

Madame d'Haupelles felt that there was a grain of truth in this assertion and sighed. To shut a girl, who has grown up to the age of twenty almost without any government, in a convent would perhaps kill her; and then, too, the benefit, if she survived, was more than doubtful.

"I find it most difficult to offer any suggestion," said Madame d'Haupelles, slowly. "I do not see how I can serve you. And I would gladly do so, for I think you very charming," she added, with a wan smile.

"Oh! I do not amount to very much," the girl replied, eagerly. "There are persons much more deserving than I of your sympathy and assistance. Once I fancied that one could be happy only with plenty of money—"

"And now?"

"It seems to me that it is not at all necessary. I begin to see that if my dress costs fifty francs instead of three hundred that I am equally well dressed."

"But not by Laferrière!"

"Ah! we do not go to her any more," answered the girl, artlessly. "I do not think, however, that I should like to do everything myself. I do not think washing dishes and sweeping rooms would be agreeable. Do you, madame? But with a little money one can get such things done. Do you know that I never breakfasted so well in my life as this morning? And that breakfast only cost three francs and five sous for three persons, while at the hotel we pay four francs each, without counting the wine!"

Katia then gave a description of her morning's marketing to her hostess, who was amazed at the facility with which the girl accommodated herself to circumstances. This ability was a great gift in itself.

"Since when," said Madame d'Haupelles, "did you make the discovery that money is not essential to happiness?"

Katia colored vividly. This simple question opened her eyes, and showed her that it was Ratier's influence which had wrought this great change. But this she could not explain to her hostess, and therefore took refuge in silence. And her hostess dropped the subject.

"This is what I have to propose to you, my child," she said, at last. "It is impossible for me to add to the pleasure of your life—for my existence is void of amusement—nor do I see that I can procure for you the assistance of other people, for we live in such totally different spheres. But, if it comes to pass—as may easily be the case—that you are wounded or insulted, if you are in fear or trouble, if you tremble lest you should make a mistake or commit a fault, come instantly here to me; if I should chance to be away wait until I come, be it hours or days, and I promise you never to desert you."

With a spontaneous gesture, Katia sank on her knees by Madame d'Haupelles' side, and kissed the white and slender hand. The lady put both arms around her, and embraced her tenderly.

"Why do you dress your hair in this way?" she said to the girl, as she lifted the crimped locks from her forehead. "It gives you an air—an air that I do not like."

"I will change it to-morrow," answered Katia, submissively.

She departed, and as the door closed after her the desolate woman looked around the dark, mournful room. She thought of her disastrous past, her lonely, melancholy future, and murmured aloud:

"Ah! if God had given me a child like that, I should have felt that it was a sign of His pardon."

But to marry Catherine! of all the problems ever offered to Madame d'Haupelles for solution, this was certainly the most difficult. To marry a girl suitably is, generally speaking, a somewhat arduous task in France; but when the ordinary difficulties are complicated by a crowd of others—Madame d'Haupelles thought long and seriously.

"The proper person," she said to herself finally, "would be one of those young men who have no especial ancestors to boast of; who are in some degree without family ties; those who can marry as seems best to themselves, without owing any account of their acts to any one; who may be a trifle Bohemian in their ways of life, but who are high-principled and honorable, for this girl is all that. There are just such men in the world. A bad man would do what the child's mother and the Colonel have failed in accomplishing: he would pervert her nature."

In Madame d'Haupelles' small circle, men of the stamp she had mentally designated were not admitted, and she finally decided to leave matters to work themselves out, and to let things take their chance.

The kind reception accorded to her by this gentle Madame d'Haupelles had gladdened poor Katia's soul. It was a totally new experience to her. She had never before seen the troubles of life faced in this calm and serious fashion; and yet a new fear was planted in the child's heart. What did the lady mean by, "If you are wounded or insulted?" These words coincided too entirely with the

advice offered by Ratier, the day before, not to cause her a thrill of terror; but with the terror came, too, the remembrance that she had two friends who would protect her—one with strong arms to uphold her, and the other who offered her the shelter of her home.

On reaching their apartment Katia found that her mother had ordered dinner from a restaurant, and that therefore she had no domestic duties to attend to. With rather a feeling of regret, Katia proceeded to make her fresh, simple toilette for the evening. The Colonel came, and received not seven thousand but six thousand francs from the hands of Madame Slavsky, who in return was overwhelmed with protestations of gratitude. After a while, several other guests appeared, who were glad to find a place to spend their evenings, where they could have a glass of tea à la Russe at ten o'clock and a game of cards.

Madame Slavsky was expecting Rémisoff, and when a loud peal of the bell heralded an arrival, it was he whom she expected. Instead, however, in rolled a stout, bald man in uniform, and a lady, not less obese but with more hair on her head.

"General Thomine! Is it possible?" exclaimed Madame Slavsky, half pleased, half sorry, for she owed this gentleman a large sum. "Where on earth did you fall from? And you, Countess, whence came you?"

"Oh! don't speak of it," answered the Countess, in a voice that was fresh and sweet, but with a strong Bavarian accent; "I come from Geneva, which is a horrid place and where I had a horrid time."

"What happened to you, Comtesse?" asked Katia, joining the group.

"And how are you, sweet? And what have you done with your pretty hair? why don't you crimp it over your forehead as you did when I last saw you?"

"It made me look too old," said Katia, slyly, annoyed by this remark, which made every one turn and look at her.

The Countess, who wore her own blonde hair hanging over her forehead almost into her eyes, shot an angry glance at the offender; but, as she was amiably disposed just at that moment, she turned again to the people around her.

"I will tell you my whole story," she said, "but I warn you that it is a long one. When, two years ago, I left Ouchy, where I had been living, I was at a loss to know where to bestow all my belongings. You remember my furniture, Barbe—the old carved furniture which I inherited from my mother?"

"Le sabre de ma mère—or was it père?" said a voice from a dark corner of the room.

"That is Ratier!" exclaimed the Countess; "no other man would be capable of such impertinence! Come here, and say you are glad to see me."

"I am, indeed," said Ratier, approaching and bowing over her hand with affected empressement; "and glad, too, to find that the air of the lakes has not made you grow thin."

"That is a delicate way, I presume, of telling me that I

have grown fat. Be off with you, and don't interrupt my tale again. Where was I? Ah! I remember; I was telling you that I did not know where to put my furniture when I left Ouchy. I was tired of Switzerland in winter, and wanted to spend six months in Italy.

"My landlord gave me some advice: he told me that in Geneva there was a sort of Trust company arrangement—a Safety Vault affair—where, for a consideration, and a heavy one, too, I do assure you, I could place my valuables. I packed my trunks, I had my furniture boxed, and when everything was arranged there were seventeen packages of all sizes and shapes. I paid a year's charges in advance, and departed for Italy, feeling very comfortable and free from anxiety.

"Instead of remaining six months, I stayed two years; and when I came back to France a few weeks since, my first thought was for these packages. I went to Geneva to make inquiries, and what did I hear? That my seventeen packages had been sold at auction to pay charges for storage."

An exclamation of horror ran around the room. Delighted at the effect she had produced, the Countess continued:

"To sell twenty thousand francs worth of effects to pay an indebtedness of four hundred or so seemed to me rather an outrageous proceeding. I therefore called on a gentleman who, I was informed, attended to matters of this kind. I was determined, you see, to obtain the amount of money from the sale, if I could do no

better. I was asked into a salon and begged to wait a while.

"Now, I am naturally of an observing turn of mind; consequently, I looked around this room. I saw a familiar look in the curtains at the windows and doors. They were very pretty—an oriental stuff, green and black, with a good deal of gold.

"'Good heavens!' I said to myself, 'these are my dining-room curtains!—'"

Here the lady stopped to shake hands with Rémisoff, who soon found his way to a chair near Katia.

The girl was very pale, but her eyes were bright. It evidently was very hard for her to treat Rémisoff with ordinary civility.

Ratier leaned against the chimney, watching all that was going on.

"Then," resumed the Countess, "I went to my seat, actually gasping for breath, and prepared a few sentences which I fancied would be rather crushing to the official whom I was waiting to see. At this moment the curtains—my curtains, you understand—parted, and a man appeared—the very incarnation, apparently, of honor and probity. To speak of my curtains to a person of such an august bearing was more difficult than I supposed; but I began to tell him about my departure from Ouchy, my arrangements, and so on, when I heard a clock strike. I looked round, and there, on the chimney-piece stand, I beheld my Louis Quinze clock and candelabras.

"In my confusion, I dropped my eyes and saw my beau-

tiful fender. You remember these things, Barbe; they were lovely in my great salon, but in that little room they were simply preposterous.

"'That is my clock, sir!' I cried, quite ready to burst into tears.

"'Is that so?' drawled the official; 'I am really very sorry that you should have been shown into a room which could awaken so many painful thoughts; but it so happens that these curtains, that clock, those candelabra, and that fender were all purchased by my mother-in-law at an auction, which took place here not long since; and she presented them to me.'

"You may be sure that I expressed my opinion, then and there; but the thing was done. I, seeing that it was hopeless to undertake any proceedings against these people, finally said, 'At all events, sir, I am entitled to a considerable sum of money; as I owed but four hundred francs.'

"He opened a huge book, ran his finger down the column—

"'Ah! Here you are!' he said, with an air of satisfaction; and then proceeded, in a calm, sing-song voice, which drove me to the verge of distraction:

"'The proceeds of the sale were two thousand one hundred and forty-two francs twenty-four centimes—from which we deduct four hundred and sixty-six francs sixty-six centimes, for fourteen months' storage; then the expenses of the sale, etc.—you will receive three hundred and twenty-seven francs ten centimes, at the bank, on presentation of this paper.'

"'But it is an absolute robbery!' I exclaimed. 'I shall bring a suit against you.'

"'And you will lose your suit, madame; for every step taken has been strictly legal.'

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, what would you have done under these circumstances?"

No one could say; and the Countess answered her own question by telling what she did do:

"I knew a woman in the next street, who kept a second-hand shop. I went to her, with a list of the articles which I was especially anxious to regain possession of. There was a snuff-box, which Louis of Bavaria had given to my father for exceptional services, and which I was most anxious to find."

"The sabre de mon père, again!" said Ratier, in a clear, ringing voice.

Rémisoff, who had drawn his chair so closely to Katia that his feet were on her dress, started back. Every one laughed.

"Good heavens!" said Madame Slavsky, "I do beg of you, Monsieur Ratier, to lay aside this habit of practical joking, when you come here. It is not agreeable to me."

"I beg your pardon, madame," replied Ratier. "But your snuff-box, dear Countess?"

"I went to this woman," resumed the Comtesse, "over and over again, occasionally finding something which belonged to me. One morning it was intensely warm. I arrived there heated and deadly thirsty.

"'Give me a glass of water,' I cried.

"'No,' said the woman; 'water is not healthy when one is warm; but you shall have a good cup of coffee.'

"She pulled a little table to the door, and behold me, drinking my coffee from a cracked Sevres cup in a Japanese china saucer! I felt compelled to ask the woman to take a chair at her own table. Let me tell you that her appearance is appalling. She wears a faded, greasy gown, over an equally faded and greasy skirt; an old India shawl—which a hundred years or so ago was very valuable—is always wrapped around her, no matter what may be the warmth of the day. There we sat, taking our coffee, when we heard the sound of a carriage, which rapidly came toward us. I looked up, and in the carriage sat a lady, examining me through her eye-glass.

"'Good heavens!' she cried, 'it is the Countess Manshauschen.'

"It was our Ambassadress, ladies and gentlemen, who had come over from Berne to make some little purchases.

"'Ah, well, dear Comtesse,' she called out to me, as she passed, 'when I hear any one complain of your exclusiveness, I will take pains to mention the sight I have seen to-day.' And she will keep her word; be sure of that!"

"What did you do?" asked Barbe.

"Do! I finished my coffee."

"And your snuff-box?" asked Ratier.

"Oh, I found it; but they asked so much for it that I would not buy it. And, after denying myself that pleasure, I went to Saxon—"

"Where she lost every penny," added General Thomine, with his loud, vulgar laugh; "and had she taken the snuff-box there, she would have left it in pawn."

Ratier all this time had carefully watched Rémisoff, who was growing more and more audacious toward Catherine, both in manner and words. Unable to restrain her anger, and fearing that she should say or do something which should make a scene, the girl rose and went into the dining-room to superintend the preparations for tea. Quietly, like a cat scenting the cream-pot, Rémisoff slipped into the room after her.

"Here it comes!" said Ratier, setting his teeth hard.

The party gathered around the card tables. Ratier proposed a round game after the older persons were seated at whist, and so managed matters that he obtained a chair close to the door of the dining-room. He would have given much to hear what was said, but Rémisoff spoke in a low voice, and Katia's throat was so dry that her words were almost inarticulate.

"I adore you," said the young idiot, blind to the fact that the girl shrank from him. "I liked your hair in those little curls on your pretty white forehead. I adore you, I say. Now do not be cruel. Let me kiss you; pretty lips were made for that, you know!"

Katia moved around the room, apparently blind and deaf to his words, but trying in reality to find strength to utter the sentence on which she had resolved.

"I am rich, very rich," continued Rémisoff, unsuspicious

of the gathering storm. "If you like horses, you shall have a superb pair, which you can drive yourself."

"Monsieur Rémisoff," said Katia, deadly pale, fixing her clear eyes upon him, "when shall we be married?"

Rémisoff started back. He had foreseen this question, but it was to come later, under the form of prayer and entreaty. He gathered himself as it were together, and with that extraordinary assurance which is the happy privilege of fatuity, he said:

"We have plenty of time to think of that! You will see what a beautiful hotel I will take for you in La Rue de Lisbonne."

"Monsieur!" said Katia, unwilling to believe her ears, and still indulging the faint hope that this man would not be cowardly enough to offer her this crowning insult. "Sir," she repeated, "have you or have you not, any wish to marry me?"

Rémisoff was not naturally bad; he was rather perverted by the world in which he had lived. Like many another young man of his years, he pretended to be far worse than he really was. He dared not refuse to answer this question, nor did he dare to answer it by a falsehood.

"No, mademoiselle; I do not wish to marry any one. You see," he continued, hastily, as he saw poor little Katia shiver as at a blow, "I might have promised you marriage and then not kept my word—"

"And been a coward and a knave twice, instead of once," answered Katia, in a low, withering voice, but it glanced from Rémisoff's thick cuticle like an arrow from the hide of a rhinoceros.

He approached the girl, and tried to take her hand.

"Leave this room, sir," said Catherine, with intense contempt. "Even a hound knows when he has been whipped."

More wounded by this sarcasm than by the epithets she had previously lavished upon him, Rémisoff opened the door and entered the salon.

Ratier, who was close at hand, assured himself with one rapid glance that all had come to pass as he had foreseen. He caught a glimpse of Catherine standing, stiff and pale, in the dining-room. This sight gave him the heartache, but for the moment he could do nothing. He therefore contented himself with watching Rémisoff, who stood for a moment winking in the brilliantly lighted salon, like a night-bird disturbed from his noonday nap; he then took his hat, and was making his way toward the door.

"But, Monsieur Rémisoff!" cried Madame Slavsky, so disturbed that she forgot to count her honors, "you are not going?"

"I have an atrocious headache, madame," answered the vanquished youth, in a sullen tone.

His hostess would have given much to know why he had a headache, but took it for granted that it was only a lovers' quarrel, and to restore tranquillity to her harassed spirit, she made a double count.

Katia turned out tea for every one. She was still utterly colorless, but she had not shed a tear; and Ratier sought in vain to read on her face a trace of anything that had happened.

The evening passed away much as such evenings do; but notwithstanding Madame Slavsky's peculiar method of keeping her game, she and her partner, the Colonel, found themselves heavy losers. She was naturally, therefore, much out of temper. To crown the disasters of the evening, Josia appeared, with an agitated face, and asked to see the Colonel.

Since the installation of Madame Slavsky in her apartments, Josia had been tacitly banished from the Eden which he had helped create. The lady had divined the youth's hopeless passion for her daughter, and was much displeased by it. Why, it were difficult to say. There was nothing dangerous about Josia. Any mother would have been willing to trust either her daughter or her purse to him; but the fair Barbe did not approve of humble lovers. Josia was poor and dependent. The little he had had been absorbed by the Colonel, and his faithful affection shocked Madame Slavsky in much the same way that she would have been shocked by the sight of a caterpillar on the artificial flowers of her ball dress.

"What is the matter now?" asked the lady, rather crossly.

"I really must see the Colonel," murmured Josia, imploringly.

"Well, see him, then; there he is!" said Madame Slavsky—rather rudely, it must be acknowledged.

Josia approached the table where his master sat alone with two candles and the remembrance of his unfortunate evening, and gave him a letter, which he said was sent to the hotel unsealed, with directions to hand it at once to the Colonel, or in his absence to his secretary.

"Therefore," said Josia, "I took the liberty of reading it."

"DEAR COLONEL:" began this extraordinary missive, "I had the pleasure about New Year's of lending you the sum of five thousand francs, to pay a debt of honor. To-day I am precisely in the position that you then were, with this difference, that the man to whom I have lost this amount has become, within the last few hours, my mortal foe. Therefore, if you cannot give me this money, I shall blow out my brains."

"Who brought this letter?" asked the Colonel.

"An old valet."

"I know; he has been in the family for years. He is a confidential servant."

"He is waiting for the reply at the hotel."

"Did you give him what he asked?" said Boleslas, lifting his heavy eyebrows with a majestic air.

Josia started back, with the look of a man who sees his best friend going suddenly mad. No, the Colonel was not mad, but he prided himself on his *sang froid.*

"Well?" said Boleslas, as he folded the letter carefully.

"No, Colonel," stammered Josia, "certainly not. I did not have the amount, and—"

With a wave of the hand the Colonel dismissed the remainder of the reply as trivial to a degree. The only aim of these various questions had been to gain the time necessary for reflection, and reflection left him no choice. He must pay the amount at once, or he could never face

the world again; for the money had been borrowed four months ago for twenty-four hours!

Boleslas put his hand in his pocket and drew out an irreproachable pocket-book, and took out the six notes which he had just received from his dear Barbe. He selected the one which was most crisp and returned it to his case, and then handed the others to Josia, who hardly dared touch it, lest it should turn to dried leaves.

"Be quite certain, Josia, that this man is the Baron's old valet, or rather his father's valet; his name is Gaëten, and should reside in Rue de Mont Thabor—the number I have forgotten; but that is of no consequence. Take a receipt, of course."

With an Homerian nod he dismissed Josia, who was bewildered by two astounding mysteries; first, how did his master come in possession of these bank-notes? and next, why, having them, did he give them up so readily?

"Well, Chevalier Orange Peel!" said Ratier, "how goes the world with you?"

"I don't know—indeed, I know nothing any more!"

"Wait a moment, and I will go with you, Chevalier!"

Ratier took a ceremonious leave of every one, shook hands with Catherine, giving her fingers a strong reassuring pressure, while having the air of scarcely touching them, and overtook the secretary on the staircase.

"What is the trouble?" he asked Josia, as they reached the street.

"It is a most disagreeable affair; but the Colonel has made it all right. He is really a most extraordinary person."

"I agree with you—a most extraordinary person," repeated Ratier; "but what has he done now?"

Josia told him the story of the letter.

"Upon my word, that man is a genius!" exclaimed Ratier, in a tone of profound admiration.

"Who?—the Colonel?"

"No, the other. Upon my word, I am filled with wonder! He is a hero! How he must laugh! If I could but hear him laugh!"

Josia stopped short.

"Do you not believe in the gambling debts?"

"Indeed I do not, most noble Chevalier; I look upon it all as a huge joke."

Josia had great confidence in Ratier's genius, and had never yet known him to make a blunder. He thought for a little time, and then said:

"It would be best, I think, to take the money back to the Colonel, and advise him—"

"No, my friend, do nothing of the kind; this money—no matter how impure the source may be whence it came—is purified by returning it to its lawful owner. 'Render unto Cæsar things,' etc. Go, sweet dove, bear the olive-branch, and fulfil your mission as peace-maker! I will go as far as the hotel with you."

The two young men walked a whole square without a word. As they turned a corner, Josia sighed a long, deep sigh.

"What is it?" said Ratier, kindly.

"How frightfully pale she was to-night! You have not

seen her for some time, I think. Do you not think that something troubles her?"

"I do not know," answered our cautious young hero. But in another moment he decided that it would be wiser to warn Josia; for, in an emergency, his assistance might be most precious. "But it may be; for she has not opened her lips this evening."

"Angel!" murmured the secretary. "Who could be hard-hearted enough to pain a child like that?"

"It was not I, Josia. I assure you that I am in no degree in fault. And after all, young girls, you know, are full of freaks; you never know where to find them!" But Josia knew nothing of young girls; they were a sealed book to him, and therefore he made no reply. Ratier continued: "If she were in danger of any kind, would you come to her aid?"

"You know I would, Ratier; you know that I would do everything I could. Has she told you?—"

"She has told me nothing; but I fancy—"

"Say to her from me, that my strength and my life are at her service; that she may make use of me as a dog, a horse, or a servant, if in any way I can serve her; that I am ready to do her bidding."

"Without reward?"

"Without reward—save the happiness of feeling that I have lifted a thorn from out her path!"

Ratier stopped Josia in the street where they were, and shook him heartily by the hand.

"All right, comrade! I shall never forget what you say

—nor will she!" With a very full heart Josia walked on at Ratier's side, and they exchanged only a few insignificant words before they said good-night to each other at the Hôtel de Bade. "All the same," thought Ratier, "I should like to know what she said to that little beast, Rémisoff; he looked like a whipped school-boy. Great events are at hand, for the Colonel must be without a sou!"

The next morning, early—that is to say, about eleven—Ratier knocked at Rémisoff's door, and found him in a shirt of light-blue silk and chamois breeches, ready to perform his somewhat restricted matutinal ablutions.

"I came early," said the young Frenchman, selecting the most commodious arm-chair. "I am afraid I disturb you."

"Some one was here earlier than you," replied Rémisoff, with his habitual suavity; "and it was he who came too early. I told him to go to the devil."

"Ah! Did you, indeed? That must have been very pleasing to your guest. May one venture to ask the name of the person whose happiness for the day you blighted in that manner?"

"It was the Colonel, of course," growled Rémisoff.

"The Colonel!—up at that hour? Impossible!"

"It was he nevertheless—flesh and bone, and skin, too!" added Rémisoff, chuckling at this great witticism.

Ratier laughed, too, and then said carelessly:

"He must have needed you, I fancy! Is he going to fight a duel?"

"I don't know, nor do I care! Needed me! I should rather say he did. Just imagine his jumping out of bed at all hours of the morning to borrow—how much, think you?"

"One hundred crowns, possibly," said Ratier, from the depths of his arm-chair.

"Twenty thousand francs!" howled Rémisoff—"twenty thousand francs! Is the man mad? I asked him if he were!"

"But," said Ratier, much thrilled by what he heard, "you have begun a nice quarrel with the Slavsky family?"

"The Slavsky family! Who cares? I loath the very sound of their names."

"Not the pretty Catherine's?"

"The pretty Catherine is an artful manœuvrer—that is my opinion about her," replied Rémisoff, and by way of sedative he squeezed a huge spongeful of water over the top of his head.

"You astonish me!" replied Ratier, calmly watching the next operation. "I thought her a very nice little girl!"

"Did you? She is a pretty shrewd one, at all events! She actually wishes me to marry her; but I know too much for that, Ratier—don't I? I am not quite such a fool as to be taken in by her, or by any woman—now, am I?" And Rémisoff, soothed by the fresh water, and by his own delicate wit and self-appreciation, showed his extremely ugly teeth, and laughed very heartily.

Ratier laughed, too. He thought Rémisoff quite amusing.

—taken, that is, in homœopathic doses. He concluded, moreover, that Catherine must have been pretty severe with the fellow, for him to feel so bitterly towards her.

"Then," said the young Frenchman, "she was not as you expected to find her?"

"Hardly! She wished me to marry her—and she was rude and insulting!"

"Is it possible?—how very strange! And you gave her up?"

"I should say so! To throw away my money, all for nothing, would hardly suit me! There are plenty of women in Paris quite as beautiful, and far more amiable."

"Perhaps you are wise," said Ratier. "What did the Colonel have to say?"

"He says he is ruined, and means to blow out his brains, and a lot more trash like that, you know!" and Rémisoff tossed away his towel with intense disdain. "Do you not like these silk shirts?" he asked.

"Yes, if they are light blue," answered Ratier; "but, if I were you, I should have a wreath of white narcissi embroidered round the neck and cuffs."

"Are narcissi, flowers?" asked Rémisoff, simply.

"Yes, flowers, to be sure," hastily answered Ratier, feeling that he might have gone too far. "But you could have roses, you know; possibly a little caterpillar would not be bad. You could set a new fashion in silk shirts."

"That is a good idea; a very good idea," said Rémisoff, thoughtfully. "I will talk the matter over with my furnisher. I have seen small fighting-cocks on such

things, but never flowers. I think I had one once with swans."

"Don't you mean geese?" asked Ratier, suavely.

Rémisoff looked up in surprise.

"Yes, perhaps; to be sure they must have been geese, for swans have such long necks!"

Ruminating upon this profound discovery, the young Russian stood still—then slowly returned to the duties of his toilette, while Ratier, with a careless good-morning, sauntered off in search of further developments. He went to call on Boleslas, whom he found the picture of despair —sitting in an arm-chair, and discussing the situation with Josia, who, equally miserable, was writing down the names of certain friends and acquaintances of the Colonel, who might, by chance, lend him a little money in this day of need.

"Ah, Ratier!" said the unfortunate speculator, "I am glad to see you; perhaps you can help us."

"I am generally able to do so, certainly," answered Ratier, with an air of modest confidence. "What is the trouble now?"

The Colonel told his tale of woe—money obtained—he did not say from whence—and lost again—squandered in the payment of debts—his application to Rémisoff, and his rebuff in that quarter. Ratier listened to the long and very old story with marvellous patience. When it was concluded, and Josia fixed his china-blue eyes upon Ratier's face, all the latter could do was to say, in tones of sympathy,

"And what do you mean to do now?"

"That is precisely what I am trying to find out," muttered Boleslas.

An idea entered Ratier's mind. Boleslas, who was watching him earnestly, caught its reflection in his face, and fancied that our friend was going to lend him money.

"You are a splendid fellow!" exclaimed the enthusiastic Pole. "Speak! my dear friend, speak! You told me that you had the means of making a second fortune. Trust your secret to me. It could not be in better hands."

"I dare say they ought to have some sort of merit after the enormous amount of money which has passed through them; but I think I told you, the other day, that the means to which I alluded could only be used by myself."

The Colonel's arms fell despairingly at his side.

"But," continued the young man, "I have a suggestion to make."

The Colonel's face brightened.

"You have travelled on the railroad, I think, between here and Rouen?"

"I think so; I have been to Trouville, but I do not think that is the same road."

"Never mind," said Ratier; "it is all the same. Did you ever happen to notice the road that crosses the Forest of Saint Germains?"

The Colonel had never noticed any such road, but he nodded an assent just the same.

"Then you must have seen that the whole ground where the trees have been cut down is covered with a tall grass—rank and disagreeable both to the nose and the touch."

"Yes, yes," replied the Colonel, impatient with all these details.

"Well, then, this grass," proceeded Ratier, "this grass makes an excellent fodder for cattle—they like it. It is good for nothing, and you can obtain the privilege of cutting it for almost nothing. It can be tied into small bundles and dipped into some resinous substance, and would be invaluable as kindling stuff."

"Magnificent!" cried the Colonel. "Ratier, your ingenuity is wonderful! You are a born speculator!"

Ratier could not restrain a laugh at this eulogium, and, with his hands still in his pockets, he walked once or twice around the room, and then back to the Colonel.

"We will share all the proceeds, Ratier," said Boleslas, with that liberality which always affected poor Josia so profoundly. "You are, in fact, the promoter of this great enterprise. But who will ask for the privilege of cutting this grass?"

"You, I should say, through your Embassy. It would be a very simple thing to do."

Boleslas bit his lips. No; he did not care to apply to the Polish Embassy, but that point could be postponed for a time. The first difficulty was where to obtain funds—not to release himself from his old difficulties—but to start on this new enterprise.

"Do you happen to have any money on hand?" he asked, timidly, of the benefactor who had opened before him such an original and brilliant prospect.

"I have the Bolivia securities, which are still at your service," answered Ratier, graciously.

Boleslas, without precisely despising these securities, had not unbounded confidence in them, and asked cautiously if they were not a little difficult to manage, and added that, if it were equally convenient, he should prefer something else.

"In that case I have but one other thing to offer, and that is as much at your service as the securities—which is, that we shall get together all the funds possible, and go to—"

"Where?"

"To Saxon!" shouted Ratier, almost in the Colonel's face.

"Saxon! To be sure! Why did I not think of that sooner!" and Boleslas took two or three rapid strides up and down the room.

"The last time I was there I won on the red. I will try the black this time. To be sure, some superstitious persons dislike black, and never touch it. There are some others who carefully avoid the number thirteen. That is another great error; for I have known remarkable success with this number. When shall we start?"

"To-night, if you say so," answered Ratier; "we shall then reach there to-morrow at two; you can play all the afternoon, and we can return by the night train."

"Only one day," sighed the Colonel, "and not a whole one, either."

"I am not rich," said Ratier, in a tone of stern reproof, "and it is a very expensive place. You know, too, that they absolutely refuse to give credit there—the hotels are disgraceful—neither hotel nor tavern. The towels are never washed, nor the sheets either, to the best of my belief!"

The Colonel had no reply to make.

"Besides," resumed the young man, "if you lose, you will have nothing more to do; if you gain, you can stay if you choose; but if you do, you will be penniless again."

"Not necessarily."

"Necessarily," returned Ratier, firmly.

Boleslas gave up the contest.

"How much money have you?" asked the young Frenchman.

"A thousand francs—"

"That is well; keep them to play with. I will pay the expenses of going and returning. We will leave Josia here."

"And why, pray?" asked the Colonel.

"Because as he does not play, he would be an unnecessary mouth to feed, in a besieged city."

"But," said the Colonel, "as he never plays, I think, in such circumstances as these, it would be wise to take him with us, for we could make him play, and he would win; you know the first time a man always wins."

"I lost two hundred louis by that little idea on the first occasion that I crossed the threshold of that place of perdition. I mean no pun, Colonel, be it understood. Let Josia stay here; I will provide a neophyte."

"Whom do you mean?" asked the Colonel, eagerly.

"I do not yet know. There are plenty to be found there on the spot—like witnesses round the doors of the mayor's office—waiting for marriages."

"Very well," said Boleslas, "we will start to-night; I wish we could go at once. A train leaves at three, but that is too soon; we should not be ready."

"Shall you see Madame Slavsky before you go?" asked Ratier, turning on the threshold.

"Of course; I should not think of leaving without—"

"Her permission!" concluded Ratier, irreverently.

The Colonel dared not show any indignation, as the young man was about to pay the expenses of their trip; and Ratier gayly departed.

Instead of going to his rooms, however, he directed his steps to the Hôtel de Louvre. It was not so long since he left Rémisoff that he could suppose him to have finished his toilette and breakfasted. In fact, he found him in the dining-room swearing at the waiters. A bottle of old wine, old at least judging from appearances, lay like a baby in its wicker carriage, and was the occasion of his anger.

"Wine at seventeen francs a bottle, and they have shaken it! It is good for nothing!" exclaimed Rémisoff as soon as Ratier appeared.

"Probably it was good for nothing before," the other ventured to say; "in that case, the waiter's carelessness would not be of so much consequence."

Rémisoff looked at him doubtfully. He was not convinced, but what could he say?

"Will you have a glass?" he said to his guest.

"As it is good for nothing, you may as well help to drink it!" replied Ratier, finishing aloud his friend's thought. "I thank you all the same, and will, in fact,

breakfast with you, as I have been too busy this morning to eat a mouthful."

While waiting for his cutlet, he said, in a low voice, to Rémisoff:

"Have you heard the news?"

As a reply is always expected to this question, Rémisoff muttered that he knew of no news worth speaking of.

"The Slavskys are going to Saxon. They leave in the two-thirty train."

"What is that to me?" muttered Rémisoff, looking at the bottle in the wicker basket with a most ferocious expression.

"You are not serious enough in your love affairs," said Ratier. "You ought not to throw away your chances in this fashion. Don't you see what you could make out of this if you choose?"

No, Rémisoff did not see, and Ratier continued:

"Well, then, these ladies are going to Saxon. You will take care to appear just as they lose—for lose they will, of course. Then you will lend them some gold pieces, and will be taken into favor again at once; for you know no human being can refuse you anything!"

"There is some truth in what you say," murmured Rémisoff; "but if they should want much money—"

"Why, you haven't it, of course. At least you can say so. Good heavens! how innocent you are, and I thought you so experienced!"

"I pretend to be innocent," answered Rémisoff, much piqued; "but it is a mere pretence. Do you think that I don't see what you mean?"

"Ah!" said Ratier, respectfully. "In that case I admire you more than ever, for you entirely succeed in concealing your ideas!"

Rémisoff smiled with an air of superiority, and poured out for his guest a second glass of that precious wine to reward him for this compliment.

"Then it is agreed—we start to-night."

"Are you going?" exclaimed Rémisoff.

"Of course, if you do—I could not think of losing the pleasure of seeing your adroit management of the affair."

"In that case, my dear fellow, we will meet at the Lyons Station at eight o'clock," said Rémisoff, tossing his napkin on the table with the air of throwing it into a seraglio. He took his hat, nodded patronizingly to Ratier, and departed.

"All right!" said the young Frenchman, looking after him. "I take Rémisoff away, and I leave Josia—Catherine will be well guarded."

He drank his coffee hastily, burned his mouth, and returned to his room, highly delighted with himself and all about him—as was to be sure usually the case with his happy nature.

During this time the Colonel—without heeding, as Ratier had done, the vulgar temptation of breakfast—rushed to his fair friend, and, utterly unaware, burst into a family scene.

The previous evening Madame Slavsky had questioned her daughter on the reason for Rémisoff's abrupt de-

parture, but she found her obstinately silent. Neither threats, anger, nor tears, could extract from Catherine the smallest explanation relative to this incident. The young girl's delicacy had been wounded, and she did not choose to expose herself to ridicule by expressing what she felt to her mother. She was certain, that were she to relate the scene of the previous evening her mother would accuse her of ill breeding and manifold absurdities, and still sore from the wounds she had received, Katia wished to gain time—time for reflection and preparation for combat.

After having uselessly bruised herself against the girl's "detestable obstinacy," Madame Slavsky, worn out with her exertions, walked off to bed, slamming the doors after her in succession, as a slight relief. Miss Amroth had been slumbering heavily for more than an hour, and Katia finally found herself alone, and able to think over all that had taken place. Ratier was right, and she wrong, in the opinion she had formed of Rémisoff. She had thought him good-hearted and simple, and had seriously contemplated the possibility of marrying him, and now that her eyes were opened, she shuddered at her previous blindness. She had allowed herself to dwell on the thought that he was rich and silly; that she would be her own mistress, and surrounded by all the luxuries of life. She saw the truth now, and realized that had Rémisoff been the honorable fellow she supposed, that she—Katia—would have deceived him; would have married him when she had no love for him, and married

him for the jewels and toilettes, the opera-boxes and horses he would have given her.

"Everybody does so," she said to herself, struggling to find some excuse --but she was none the less humiliated as she looked back upon the past.

"What must Ratier think of me?" she murmured half aloud, while burning blushes covered her cheek, alone as she was in the darkness.

Ratier thought, of course, that it was a degradation to a woman, to marry a man whom she neither loved nor respected, and in this opinion she now agreed.

"What will he say when I tell him what was said to-night?" Gentle tears cooled her tired eyes, and the young girl fell asleep, soothed by the thought that she had at least two friends in the world—Ratier and Madame d'Haupelles.

But the inevitable "next day" came. Katia was summoned to her mother's room, and the discussion of the previous evening began again.

"What impertinences did you address to that young man which drove him off in that way?"

"It was not I who uttered impertinences!" answered Catherine, with a certain quiet obstinacy which formed part of her character.

"What did he say to you? A youth paying his addresses to a young girl often utters an occasional folly. It was absurd in you to take things so *au sérieux*."

"Mamma!" said Katia, suddenly; "are you sure that this man wished to marry me?"

Madame Slavsky fell into a fit of rage the more violent, since at that moment, for the first time, a doubt entered her own mind.

"I trust," she said, "that you were not bold enough to ask such a question of him?"

"That is precisely what I did do," answered Catherine, haughtily, though her lips trembled. All at once this life of expedients, of falsehood and deception had become intolerable to her—hitherto she had been too frivolous to heed it.

"You asked him that question!" cried Barbe, despairingly. "Good heavens! what have I ever done to deserve such a child!"

The reader, if he looks back upon his own experience, will recall the fact that it is always those persons who are least well-behaved, who have given the worst possible examples, who have led the least commendable lives, who call most vociferously upon heaven when things go wrong. In the name of that moral sense which they have lost, of the virtue which they have never practised, of the religion which they do not feel, of that submission to their superiors which they have scorned—in the name of all these they precipitate themselves on the persons who disturb or cross them, and call Heaven to witness their misfortunes.

"Mamma!" repeated Catherine, "he did not wish to marry me."

"Where on earth did you get such an idea in your head? How is it that a young girl dares to allow herself to suppose that a man would pay court to her, unless it were

with the intention of marrying her? It is the height of indecency. Where, I say, did you get such a notion?"

At this moment the Colonel rang. Barbe sent Katia to the salon to receive him and entertain him until she finished her toilette, for no one had ever known her to receive Boleslas, except as carefully dressed as for the most ceremonious visitor.

The Colonel was so full of his subject, that he paid no attention to the angry gleam in Catherine's eyes. He sank down in a chair and relapsed into a dream, about figured queens and knaves, and all sorts of combinations. If none of these succeeded, he made up his mind to turn his back forevermore upon the tempting green tables.

"What is it now?" imperiously asked Barbe, sweeping into the room with a great rustling of silks and crackling of starch.

"It is simply, dear friend," answered the Colonel, bowing over her hand, "that I have paid out five thousand of the six thousand francs you lent me, and that I stand before you now absolutely without resources."

Madame Slavsky's eyes flashed disdainful fire, and Boleslas hastened to add:

"I have been to Rémisoff. We were mistaken in that young man; he was as disagreeable as possible—I may even say, insolent—"

"We may thank Katia for that!" cried Madame Slavsky. "She committed yesterday an act of the most inexcusable folly, and has involved us in a quarrel with Rémisoff—"

"However," resumed the Colonel, "at the moment when

I was in utter despair, Providence sent me unexpected aid. Ratier—"

At this name Barbe frowned. The Colonel took her hand to soothe her. Katia had long since left the room.

"Ratier is really the most extraordinary fellow. His invention is something wonderful; he is full of ideas! He proposes that I shall go to Saxon."

"To Saxon!"

"And we start to-night. He pays the expenses and we share in the profits and losses."

"So that if you win, he takes half," observed Barbe, with some acerbity.

"But, my dear friend! It is a purely business arrangement; without his assistance I could not possibly go, for, with the exception of that one note for a thousand francs, I have not a penny."

"When did you say you should go?" asked Barbe, thoughtfully.

"To-night, at eight, by the way of Geneva."

"Very good; I will go also. There is a train at three five, and I shall be there to receive you!"

"Barbe! Is it possible!" cried the Colonel, in delight.

"Do you imagine that I would allow you to go alone? No! my friend, you know too well that our destinies are allied—"

Boleslas gratefully kissed her white hand again.

"Hark!" he said, "that is surely the clock striking one. You won't get off!"

"You will see; I shall go like an English woman, with

a travelling bag as big as my fist; and at two fifty-five I will be at the Lyons station."

"But why not wait until evening, and go with us?" urged the Colonel, to whom every hour passed away from Barbe was a real deprivation.

"What are you thinking of? And your dear Ratier, what would he say? No, my friend; the proprieties of life are never to be outraged. I advise you even to conceal the fact that you have seen me."

"But I told him that I was coming here."

"That was a great mistake—never tell any one, that you intend doing anything at any time. And now say nothing to him of my going, and when you see me at Saxon, appear to be very much astonished. Good-bye!"

"You don't mean to send me away already?" said Boleslas.

"If you do not go, I shall certainly miss the train. You forget."

Boleslas departed, saddened at leaving and yet rejoiced at the knowledge that he was to have his incomparable friend for fetish in his coming struggle with Fortune. He maintained that he had never succeeded in anything when away from her, and this was true; but it must also be stated that he was never successful in those enterprises he attempted under her supervision.

Madame Slavsky prepared her bag, which was nearly as small as she had described it—then she summoned her daughter.

"I am going away," she said, "for forty-eight hours at

the most. You will remain here, for I am too much displeased with you to care for your society. I therefore punish you in this way."

Katia did not look altogether crushed. The mother added, "I am going to Saxon."

The girl was about to exclaim, "Oh, mamma, take me," for like a battle-horse she caught the smell of powder; but she was in disgrace and her pride restrained her.

"I insist on the greatest circumspection in your conduct. Do not leave Miss Amroth. Here are twenty francs; you will not want more before my return."

Madame Slavsky looked around the room to see that she had forgotten nothing, and then departed in excellent spirits, and at five minutes past three she left Paris.

Ratier, too, had made his preparations: after taking a certain amount from that drawer of which we know, he practised a series of vocal exercises at his piano, and then hastily packed a bag that was a trifle larger than Barbe's, which he tossed on his bed, and taking the key of his apartment he rapidly started forth in the direction of Montmartre.

When he reached the Férauds, he found Madame Louise sewing in the garden, as she watched her little girl at play. Her astonishment was great at seeing Ratier, for he knew the hours when he should find Jacques at home, and timed his visits that he might meet him.

"Yes, Madame Louise," he said, in reply to her amazed look; "yes, I am aware that I am taking a great liberty in intruding on you in this way, but I came to ask a favor of

you and of your husband. Are you disposed to shelter a young lady, who without your roof may have no other refuge than the street?"

"But," stammered Madame Féraud, "your request is so unexpected—so extraordinary—"

"I assure you, nevertheless, that it is absolutely proper. Let me explain a little. A young girl whom I esteem, nay, I will be frank, whom I love, may possibly—I do not say certainly, you observe—but may possibly be compelled to seek a refuge from the pursuit of certain objectionable persons. Will you give her a room and your sympathy for a night or two?"

"Of my sympathy you may be certain, Monsieur Ratier, but I can promise nothing more until I have asked Jacques."

"Very well; ask him, then."

"She has no mother?" said Madame Féraud, with some little hesitation.

"Alas! it is to protect her from her mother that I come to you."

The lady looked at her child playing at her feet and sighed.

"Jacques will not refuse, I am sure," she said, gently.

"I ask it for not longer than twenty-four hours, and I hope that I may not need to trouble you. I wish simply to provide for any contingency which may arise. I am about to leave Paris for a day or two with some friends. No, I cannot call them friends—with some people whom I know."

"And the young lady?"

"Is here; and it is because I am going away that I come to you."

Louise looked earnestly at Ratier, but dared not ask the question which burned on her lips.

"She is a foreigner. She is to be pitied—"

"And you love her?"

"Yes, I love her; but that is nothing. She will marry some rich man; she must do so, for luxury is necessary to her. Farewell: I shall see you again the day after to-morrow."

He turned away, leaving Madame Féraud extremely disturbed by the responsibility she had incurred; with her curiosity, however, so much excited, that she almost hoped that the unknown would have need of her protection, and yet, at the same time, she feared some discomfort arising from the affair. She had therefore ample food for thought until the arrival of her husband at night.

While Ratier pursued his way back to his apartment he thought he would ascertain if his plans had succeeded. The whole arrangement was doubtful of execution: to induce Madame Slavsky to leave Paris, and yet take no direct steps toward that end, was certainly somewhat problematical. A headache on Barbe's part, a little loitering on that of the Colonel, and the whole plan came to naught.

But Ratier had a very accurate knowledge of the human heart, and especially of those belonging to the people with whom, at this period of his life, he was especially thrown. He knew that Saxon had an irresistible attraction for Barbe; he was certain, too, that Boleslas decided on nothing

without consulting her, and, moreover, to escape the agony of indecision, that he would consult her at once. Drawing out his watch, therefore, he said to himself:

"Half past three; at this precise minute Madame Slavsky ought to be at Brunoy. Let us ascertain her whereabouts."

He went to La Rue de Merosmesnil, and said to the concierge,

"Is Madame Slavsky in?"

"She has just gone out, sir—about an hour ago, that is —mademoiselle is at home, however."

"Thank you," said Ratier, retiring from the little window. He hesitated for a moment. He had, to be sure, a great desire to see Catherine, but a new-born sentiment of delicacy restrained him, and prevented him from profiting from her mother's absence. He therefore took a pencil and wrote on a card:

"In case of any unforeseen and urgent necessity go to my friend, Madame Féraud, Château des Brouillard, Rue Girardon, Montmartre."

He added the letter "R" as signature, and placed the card in an envelope; wrote the address: *To Madame or Mademoiselle Slavsky—Important;* and sent it by a commissionaire, whom he followed to the door. In a few moments the man appeared.

"The lady was out, sir," he said; "but the young lady took it; she said it was all right, and that there was no answer."

Ratier shrugged his shoulders as if he were much

annoyed, but his heart sang a joyous little tune to which his feet kept time, as he ran lightly up the Colonel's stairs. That gentleman was out. Josia was packing a trunk or rather a capacious valise, which was divided into innumerable little compartments, with innumerable small boxes and brushes.

"Upon my life!" said Ratier, with a disrespectful sniff. "One would think this the paraphernalia of some old coquette!"

Josia was shocked at such irreverence, and looked at his friend reproachfully.

"How many hair-dyes are there in those pots, Josia? Now own up? You won't tell me that! Well, tell me then if Madame Slavsky has gone!"

Josia hesitated, having been told that the movements of that lady were never to be divulged to any one at any time.

"One more question, my dear boy!" continued Ratier. "When will you learn to lie with grace?"

Josia colored furiously.

"You are in a capital school, to be sure, but you are a dull pupil!" continued Ratier. "Never mind, I forgive you. But this dear, good Madame Slavsky has departed Has she not?"

"Who told you so?" asked Josia, thinking that he could thus wriggle out of the necessity of answering this question.

"'Who told you so!'" mocked Ratier. "Ah! Josia, Josia! How low you have fallen! How deceitful you have grown!"

"I do not mean to be deceitful," stammered the poor youth, disturbed and almost ready to weep.

"Take care, young lily of Sharon—candid and honest creature—white swan in this valley of tears—I will tell you then that she left Paris at three five, and mademoiselle is here alone."

"No, not alone," answered Josia, hastily. "Miss Amroth is with her."

"And what young man do we know who will spend the whole day to-morrow wandering around La Rue Merosmesnil, and who is it who will rise early to pick up every scrap of orange peel in the whole Quartier?"

Josia turned a deep crimson, and cast a piteous glance at his persecutor.

"Ah! well, Josia, do whatever seemeth unto you best. Look out for the child. The mother has gone, would it were forever! I mean what I say, Josia: that woman is my bête noire. Listen! there is a café almost opposite: breakfast there, dine there, sup there; and watch well that no one runs away with the precious treasure."

"But," said Josia, "it costs a good deal to breakfast, dine, and sup at a café."

"And the generous Colonel omitted, of course, to leave you a penny. Probably that considerate woman, Madame Slavsky, did the same to her daughter, and has left her nothing to eat. It won't matter much to Katia, who lives on chocolate, but Miss Amroth will object a little, I fancy. But, Josia—friend of my soul—here are two louis; I lend them to you; you can return them when the Colonel

pays all your salary. Go, my friend, and may that breakfast at the café rest lightly on your mortal frame."

The Colonel came in at this moment, and saw the two louis enter Josia's hand.

"I am paying my debts, Colonel," said the young Frenchman. "I always make it a rule to do that before I start on a journey, be it long or short."

"You owe money to Josia!"

"For two years and a half. I found the charge in my account-book—for you know, Colonel, I keep my accounts."

"Of course," said the Colonel, loftily. "Otherwise, where should we be?"

"That is precisely what I say," answered Ratier, with the most innocent look in the world. "Where would you be?"

Turning toward Josia while Boleslas inspected his valise, he said, in a low voice,

"Give me those two louis quickly or he will borrow them; say that you gave them back to me to pay a little bill with at the café!"

Before Josia fully grasped the meaning of the words, Ratier swiftly inserted his fingers in his friend's vest-pocket, and extracted the two gold pieces.

"I will give them to you again," he murmured. "Colonel, I must run out for a moment; I forgot something. Any commissions?"

Love and danger inspired Josia with cunning, and with the ability to tell a falsehood.

"You are going past the café, Ratier," he stammered; "just go in and pay my little account."

"All right!" said Ratier. "I know."

No sooner had he disappeared than the Colonel approached his secretary.

"You have no need of money, Josia: lend me those two louis. I will return them when I come back."

"I have just given them to Ratier, and asked him to pay an urgent debt," said Josia, emboldened by the thought that it was for Catherine that he lied.

"That was foolish—foolish and reprehensible!" said the Colonel, frowning heavily. "You have no other funds, then?"

"I have one franc and sixty-five centimes, Colonel," answered Josia, eagerly.

"Keep that," said Boleslas, with stately liberality. "Keep that for your little amusements while I am gone."

"Thirty-five cents worth of amusement!" cried Ratier, at that moment; he having come in at the open door unheard. "But prudence is a good thing with a young man, Colonel. You are very wise! Dinner is on the table, and we must hurry unless we wish to lose the train."

As they left, Ratier stealthily restored the two louis to Josia, giving him at the same time a look which enjoined caution and vigilance.

As they left their carriage at the station, Ratier's lynx eye detected Rémisoff striding up and down with angry impatience.

"How magnificent he is!" thought our friend. "How glorious in his righteous indignation! He reminds one of a captive lion."

Sending the Colonel to buy their tickets, Ratier hurried to meet Rémisoff, who had not yet seen him.

"You have your ticket, I presume?"

"My ticket! No, I have not; I did not much care to go off alone. Suppose you had not come!"

"Well, you would have lost the money for your ticket in that case, that is all."

"You take things easily, Ratier, upon my word. I should not have thrown away my ticket; I should have gone, and looked like a fool all by myself."

"Tell me about it on the train, my dear friend," interrupted Ratier, seeing Boleslas approaching, with that look of a lost dog, which distinguishes even the most intelligent persons when they are wandering about in a railway station. "Get your ticket, quick, and I will wait for you."

Rémisoff rushed off, elbowing every one and treading on the toes of every one.

"Colonel," said the young Frenchman, bustling up, "find seats for us."

"Aren't you coming?" exclaimed the bewildered Boleslas.

"Yes; I am going now for the papers."

The Colonel went from car to car, and finally succeeded in finding an empty compartment, of which he took immediate possession by placing his valise, cane and coat in the corners.

The train was crowded. Boleslas suffered agonies as to how many persons would establish themselves in his compartment. Fortunately the articles of baggage were so well distributed that they frightened off timid souls, and he remained master of the situation.

But where was Ratier? The porters were closing the doors noisily, and yet he did not come. At the last moment the perturbed Colonel saw him coming, but not alone.

"Who the deuce is that?" thought Boleslas.

"Hurry, gentlemen!" exclaimed the porter.

A sudden jar threw Rémisoff into the arms of the Colonel, and they drew back mutually disconcerted and annoyed.

"Good heavens!" sighed the Colonel.

"What—the devil!" muttered Rémisoff.

Ratier was enchanted; his whole soul was filled with malicious joy, of which he showed nothing, but calmly watched these two men whom he had succeeded in shutting up together. They had come to an open rupture not more than twelve hours before, and now seemed quite ready to begin to quarrel again.

Ratier determined to make them speak.

"You did not know, I presume, that the Colonel has got possession of an invention which will be a perfect mine of wealth to him."

"I am glad to hear it," answered Rémisoff, jerking out his words in the manner which was quite habitual to him when out of temper.

"Yes; things will go smoothly with him now," said Ratier.

Rémisoff breathed a sigh of relief, feeling that he would not now be annoyed by further applications for money.

After a while, when he saw that the Colonel was asleep, he said:

"Why did that idiot come?"

"You know, of course," answered Ratier, "he came because the better part of himself is on her way to Saxon."

"Stuff!" cried Rémisoff. "The idea of a man of his age being so foolish! He ought to be ashamed!"

"No, I do not think so. This strong affection is the one redeeming point in the lives of these two, and that they really love each other is something in their favor."

At the next station Boleslas called Ratier aside.

"Why did you put that ill-mannered cub into our compartment?" he said, to Ratier.

"I put him in?" answered the latter, with the most ingenuous air. "How could I help his coming?"

"What is he going to do at Geneva?" asked the Colonel, abruptly.

"I do not know. Buy a watch, possibly."

There was nothing more to be said, and our travellers went on. At Dijon the train stopped ten minutes. There are some stomachs so constituted that the words "ten minutes for refreshments" at once whet their appetites. Our three friends therefore attacked a huge pile of sandwiches, while Rémisoff magnificently offered a half bottle of Madeira. How was it possible after this for Boleslas to turn a cold shoulder upon him? They drowned their

differences, therefore, in this doubtful Madeira, and soon after fell asleep. After hours of wearisome travel our friends hailed from afar off the frowning rocks of Saxon. Impatiently they waited until the train puffed into the station. To jump off and rush to the Casino was instantaneous with Boleslas. Rémisoff was by no means in such haste, and as he stepped off the car he said to Ratier:

"You know, if they are not here, that you and I will have an account to settle!"

Ratier smiled blandly.

Without one glance at the mirror to see whether his superb whiskers were in order, Boleslas rushed to the Casino, as we have said; but Rémisoff ordered a room and began his toilette. Boleslas walked through the first room where the play was low, and where he knew that he should not find Barbe. But in the next he beheld her seated in a good, quiet place, perfectly erect and immovable in her chair. Her mere toilette would have marked her out to a keen observer as an experienced gambler. Not an inch of lace, or of fringe, nothing hanging from her sleeves. Her simple costume was one in which a woman might travel all over Europe without being noticed: a toque of Lophophores—a trifle too young, perhaps—was nevertheless wonderfully becoming; and a small veil, not half lifted, could be easily dropped in case of defeat or discomfiture.

How beautiful she was! At least this was the Colonel's idea. A small pile of gold was methodically arranged in front of her, and at each turn of the wheel she took one,

two, or four of these gold pieces and placed on the numbers she preferred. Imperturbable as destiny, she followed out certain combinations known to herself alone. The pitiless rake of the croupier swept it all away. She was very pale, but continued her play with the obstinacy of an old player.

"She is losing! Good heavens, she is losing!" said Boleslas to himself, too much troubled to find a chair.

He stood watching her. At last he saw the croupier thrust toward Madame Slavsky at the end of his rake a handful of bank-notes. Now Boleslas thought he might venture to speak to her. Barbe raised her eyes and smiled. The Colonel, seeing that she was now winning, breathed such a sigh of relief—that the people about him looked round to see where all the air came from—and sank into a chair that a fortunate player had just left, and went to work.

You people who toil from ten until four, writers who lean over their desks all night, artists who stand at their easels from morn until dewy eve, music teachers, rope-dancers, learned dogs, and hard-worked cattle; you fancy, perhaps, that it is you who work and gamblers who repose. By no means! There is no toil like that of the devotee of the green table.

Boleslas went to work therefore most seriously, and as cautiously as a cat who dreads the fire. Ratier watched him for some little time, and then remembering that he had an unpleasant surprise in store for Rémisoff, departed to turn again wait for him. The conquering hero soon made

his appearance, freshly shaven and absolutely irresistible. Ratier pointed out Madame Slavsky to his travelling companion with an air of triumph.

Rémisoff shrugged his shoulders, which thing clearly said: "It was not she whom I wished to find," and looked around the room inquiringly. Then he came directly to the point.

"Where is mademoiselle?"

"I do not know," answered our friend. "How should I know? It has been impossible for me to interrupt her mother. Just try it for yourself, and see what you will get."

Rémisoff walked through the rooms, looking in every corner, behind all the curtains, and then stood still by the entrance, with the handle of his cane in his mouth, in sulky silence.

"I am afraid," said Ratier, as if the idea had just struck him, "I am really afraid that she did not come."

"Then why did you bring me?" growled Rémisoff.

"Really, now," said Ratier, artlessly, "you should not blame me. The mother is here, you see!"

This fact was incontestable. And as the Russian could not deny it, Ratier improved the advantage he had gained to say:

"After all, the mamma is the one whom you should endeavor to please—gain her heart, and the game is yours!"

But Rémisoff would not listen to this advice. He began to grow very angry, declared that he had been abominably mystified, and that he should return to Paris at once.

"Not at once, my dear fellow. You see I bear no malice, notwithstanding all the foolish things you have just said to me. But you cannot depart until to-morrow morning, for the locomotive has been put in the stable. The horses must rest, you know. You can go on foot, to be sure, but I doubt if you would gain much."

"Very well," answered Rémisoff. "I am going to bed, and to-morrow we will have a talk!"

"Not so," answered Ratier, laying his hand on his arm; "not so. I choose to hear what you have to say now."

The Russian looked up quickly; the tone was a new one.

"Do you mean to quarrel with me?" he asked.

"Yes, I do. I wish to tell you distinctly that I did bring you from Paris with the hope, realized as you see, that Mademoiselle Slavsky would not be here."

"You admit this?" exclaimed Rémisoff, enraged at the coolness of the avowal.

"I glory in it," said Ratier. For, notwithstanding the gravity of the position, he could not restrain his sense of Rémisoff's utter imbecility, nor his wish to torment him. "I brought you here—shall I tell you why? To ensure the safety and repose of this poor child—of this honorable girl to whom you have made the most infamous proposals."

"But it was at your suggestion."

"Not so. Did you not have brains to see that I was laughing at you?"

"I see it now—"

"I did not choose that you should be in Paris, and

Madame Slavsky here. You amuse me extremely, sometimes; but not for long, be it understood—"

"You are insufferable!" interrupted Rémisoff. "Madame Slavsky was right when she said so."

"Madame Slavsky is possibly, in your opinion, right in many things. And between you, you would sacrifice a pure young girl. But you will not succeed in your plans: I will prevent it! Do you hear? I, Ratier, will prevent it!"

Rémisoff shrugged his shoulders. Ratier kept his hand on his arm.

"Yes, I will prevent it. You are an honest man: at least you would claim that title for yourself. You would not take a bank-note from the Colonel's portfolio, and yet God knows that there is none of his own in it; you would restore a purse, if you found one, to its rightful owner; you would be ashamed not to pay any one for services rendered; and yet you would rob a young girl of her honor, of all that she has in this world. Is this honorable conduct, sir?

Rémisoff answered only by a surly growl.

"You told me that she had had adventures. Your authority, sir, for this statement?"

"But," said Rémisoff, somewhat discomfited, "where so many marriages have come to naught, I presumed—"

"You presumed a thing which did not exist, sir, and you stated it as a truth. Do you know that it was a calumny, and a calumny against a creature incapable of self-defence?"

"I did not mean to do her any harm!" protested Rémisoff.

"Indeed! You have a singular way of doing no harm to people, and when I saw this—I, who am nothing and nobody—I took it into my head to protect innocence. On the whole I like this rôle of Don Quixote. My lances are all ready. Are yours?"

"Upon my word, Ratier, I do not think it necessary for us to quarrel. You have made me realize that I have done wrong. The young lady of whom you speak has lived amid such corrupt associations—in fact, how could I think—under the protection of her mother and the Colonel—that a girl could grow up pure and virtuous? She loves all the luxuries of life: she says so distinctly. I thought this until the moment when she asked me, in so many words, 'when I wished to marry her.'"

"Ah!" said Ratier, with a pang, awaiting with anguish the disclosure to which he had led up with such infinite difficulty.

"Yes, she asked me the question outright, and looked at the same time as if she knew precisely what I was going to answer. I said to myself, at once, that if she were the kind of girl I had supposed, that she never would have dared to ask this question. And now, Ratier, if you think that we ought to fight a duel, I am ready."

"No," replied Ratier. "But you acknowledge, that if I had not prevented you, you would have committed an act of atrocious villany. You would have gone to the mother, and bought her daughter of her. Is that the act of an honorable man?"

Rémisoff turned away. Ratier continued:

"You are not naturally without heart. You would not ill-treat a dog in cold blood. And yet you would have inflicted on this poor child eternal misery and shame!"

"I see, Ratier, I see," said the young man, who was not wholly bad. "I am heartily ashamed of myself."

"Very well," replied Ratier, extending his hand. "And now let us go and see the Colonel; it is a great sight, and quite worth the journey.'

For a time the two young men stood behind Boleslas, and then Ratier leaned over his shoulder and dropped twenty francs on the table. It rolled to the number thirteen, and stopped there. Boleslas immediately laid a gold piece upon it; and presently Ratier slipped seven hundred francs into his pocket, much to the disgust of those who had been sitting there for hours. "An amateur has no business to win so insolently," said eyes of every color, fixed upon the intruder. Ratier heeded their language but little, and went to order dinner. While engaged in this occupation, he saw Boleslas approaching with every indication of profound despair.

"I have lost every penny," he groaned.

"Ah! I am sorry," replied Ratier. "We had best have remained in Paris."

"But you have won! Lend me a few hundred francs."

"No, I will not. Let us dine now. Where is Madame Slavsky?"

That lady just then appeared, feeling the need of food. A certain sparkle of her eyes indicated that she had won, but she was too wise to say so. She did not seem to be

surprised at the sight of Rémisoff, for Saxon is a strange place, where everybody meets, and where there is no time for any emotions save those around the green-table.

Our friends dined but poorly; the waiter being somewhat amazed when Ratier told him to take away his soup.

"It is at least a week old," he said.

The soup was sour, to be sure, but he had been in the habit of serving sour soup so long to travellers that he had forgotten that any one could make any objection to such a trifle. A fish came and was sent off. Then a roasted chicken.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried Ratier, "this is a real chicken—an honest chicken."

And in a moment more he carved it into bits. Madame Slavsky, absorbed in her thoughts, accepted mechanically the two wings and the slices of breast he sent her. Just as Rémisoff was quite ready to burst forth in a protest against the injustice of this division, the Colonel burst into a loud exclamation.

"I am in the vein!" he cried. "Dear Ratier, lend me just one hundred francs—I feel sure of winning—"

But Ratier had the cruelty to quench the light in those prophetic eyes.

"Sit down, Colonel, and eat your chicken."

"No, no," answered Boleslas. "Quick! lend me one hundred francs. You have won—"

"Yes, I have won our travelling expenses. I am no capitalist, remember. Will you have that?" he said, as he drew a dazzling twenty-franc piece from his pocket, with a laugh.

Boleslas snatched it, but Madame Slavsky interposed.

"Mark it!" she cried. "Marked pieces always win in the first place, and then, if it does win, you want to keep it as a luck-penny."

She scratched it with a knife, and Boleslas hurried off.

"Now, Rémisoff," exclaimed the young Frenchman, "now that our eccentric friend has departed, we will proceed to eat his share of the chicken."

Rémisoff asked no better. A second chicken was sent for, and as the party awaited its arrival, the door opened and Boleslas appeared.

"I have won!" he exclaimed. "I knew that I should."

And going at once to Ratier, he handed him the marked piece. Madame Slavsky exclaimed:

"Give it to me, Monsieur Ratier! give it to me. It will bring me good luck."

"Madame, it is yours," said Ratier, courteously.

"I won two hundred francs, and shall begin to play again after dinner," said the Colonel, in considerable excitement. "And now, some champagne."

A liquid dignified by that name was brought, which our friends drank with some disgust.

"Monsieur Rémisoff," said Barbe, suddenly, "have you ever played?"

"Never."

"How delightful! You must play, and you will win. That is absolutely certain. Will you play for me?"

Rémisoff hesitated. To play for this queenly dame was to lose all the results; but how could he refuse?

"No," he said, finally; "no, I prefer to play for myself."

Barbe threw an angry glance in his direction, but Rémisoff was hardened.

Our party adjourned to the tables.

"It is detestable here," said Rémisoff, with some disgust.

"Detestable!" cried Ratier. "You have no taste for the study of character. Look at Barbe, with her frown and compressed lips. And the Colonel—does he not look like an old mummy? This is the work of that fatal demon of play," he continued, solemnly. "And if you allow yourself to be seized by his claws, you will always bear the mark of it."

Rémisoff hesitated.

"I will try it this once," he murmured.

They went to the extremity of the table.

"What shall I do?" he asked, ashamed to acknowledge his ignorance.

"Look here," answered Ratier, throwing down a five-franc piece upon the line which separated two numbers.

Before Rémisoff had time to grasp the *modus operandi*, a little pile of money was pushed toward Ratier, who quietly put it in his pocket.

"I don't understand," said the Russian, helplessly.

"I have won; you see that, don't you? It is now your turn, young neophyte."

In some agitation Rémisoff placed ten francs on a number. The little noise of the wheel was heard, and the money disappeared.

"Why! they have taken my money!" he said, in a tone of indignation which made those persons smile who heard it.

"Go on!" said Ratier. "Rome was not built in a day!"

Rémisoff hesitated. Ratier set the example by laying down a ten-franc piece so that it was on four numbers. His docile pupil did the same.

A moment or two of suspense, and our two friends saw pushed toward them two comfortable little piles of money.

"You had more than this," grumbled Rémisoff, discontentedly, feeling that he had been cheated.

"Yes, because I played only on two numbers. You can do the same."

Rémisoff tried it, and lost.

"Play with me," he said to Ratier. "When you do, I win."

Ratier looked at him compassionately.

"Superstitious already," he said. "You get on rapidly, young man."

"Hush! hush!" was heard around them, one of the rules of the room being, that no conversation shall take place there.

"Here," said Ratier, mysteriously thrusting some small flat parcel into Rémisoff's hand. "Put that in the left pocket of your vest, but do not look at it."

"Will it make me win?" asked Rémisoff, earnestly.

"I don't know what effect it will have on you," answered the Frenchman, boldly; "but it made me win."

And, profiting by the absorbed attention with which Rémisoff was watching the wheel, he disappeared through one of the long windows into the garden.

The evening was very mild, although the season was still so early. The winter snows were melted, and transformed to harmonious cascades. In the bright moonlight Ratier could see them rushing tumultuously down the mountain side. This sound of running water mingled strangely with the commonplace realities of the lights of the Casino, the clinking of glasses in the café, and the loud laughing of the men and women strolling about the garden. Ratier turned away in disgust and walked on a few steps, until he was entirely alone and opposite the mountain. Hundreds of feet above his head was a stream, narrow as a knife-blade, that glittered like a band of diamonds.

"She, too," said Ratier, folding his arms and thinking of Catherine—"She, too, has lived among refuse, and she, too, leaves it behind her as she enters on a new and larger life. May it not be, however, that this limpid stream becomes muddy down below? Am I not worse than a fool in finding any amusement in seeing all these people throw their lives away in this manner! What object did I really have in inducing them to come here, except that of securing for Catherine a few hours of repose and peace? She is probably very happy now."

At the thought of her, sitting quietly at her window watching this glorious full moon, Ratier grew sad.

"Little does she know that it is to me that she owes

these few hours. But, after all, what does that matter, provided she enjoys them? Poor child!"

He felt in his pocket for the wherewithal with which to light a cigarette, for the man of civilization consoles himself in any strait with his cigarettes, this being one of the points which distinguishes him from the brute creation; but his paper was gone.

"Idiot!" he muttered. "I gave it to Rémisoff for a fetish. And he is quite capable of winning with it, and then keeping it. Bless my soul! what a man that is!"

Mechanically driven by that longing for cigarettes which poisons one's happiest moment, he turned toward the *Inferno*, as he politely called the Casino, when he was met by several strange objects. An enormous bassoon was walking, apparently alone, in the garden, followed by two violoncellos. A closer investigation disclosed the fact, however, that they were really borne on the backs of stout peasants.

"Where are you going?" he said, like the hero in the fairy tale of "Riquet of the Tuft."

The moon, the shining water, and all this singular phantasmagoria, had, in fact, somewhat disturbed his brain.

"There is a concert to-night for the benefit of a family, whose father and sole support was buried under an avalanche," answered one of the porters. "It begins at eight o'clock."

"They sing, then, at Saxon, as well as at Monaco," murmured Ratier, half to himself, as, humming an old melody, he took his way to the concert hall and examined

the programme, which was mostly made up with the names of amateurs.

A sudden inspiration seized Ratier. He went to the leader of the orchestra and had a mysterious talk with him of some ten minutes.

On leaving the concert room he met Madame Slavsky coming toward him with wild and haggard eyes.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "I have found you."

"You were looking for me then, madame?" said our friend, in his most amiable tones.

"Monsieur Ratier, I entreat of you to lend me some money!" cried Barbe. "I have lost every penny."

She wrung her hands mechanically, looking like Lady Macbeth. Ratier examined her face deliberately. She was very pale in this clear white light. Her eyes were dilated, her lips slightly drawn away from her white teeth. She was very handsome thus; infinitely handsomer than in her every-day life. Her age was indefinite; she might have been twenty or sixty. She was superb. Ratier looked at her with the intense pleasure of an artist.

"I have pledged my jewelry," she said, hastily, "with that of the Colonel."

"He has lost too?"

"He is still losing; but he has nearly exhausted every penny. Monsieur Ratier, I must have money."

She looked him full in the face. The young man shivered and turned away his eyes.

"Have you been winning to-night?" he asked.

"Yes—at one time I had thirty thousand francs—I

must have money, Monsieur Ratier," and she grasped the young man's arm convulsively. He looked at her with a kind of angry pity.

"At this moment," he thought, "she would, if I chose, sacrifice Boleslas to me without a pang. She is not a responsible being. If Rémisoff were here, she would sell her daughter to him without any hesitation!"

Instinctively he looked toward the Casino. There was no sign of Rémisoff.

"Dear Monsieur Ratier," said Barbe, passing her arm coaxingly through that of the young man, "I know that I have not always been so kind to you, that you should be willing to take much pains to oblige me; but if you should come to my assistance now—in this hour of need—I swear to you that I will never forget it. I have an excellent memory, and never forget a kindness done to me. Be obliging now, and lend me what money you have about you."

She looked in his eyes. She was still very beautiful. Ratier was right: she was not responsible.

"How much do you want?" he asked, painfully agitated, and desirous of getting away from her.

"Two hundred francs, at least; you know I may lose before I win—or, have you a thousand? Say, Monsieur Ratier, can you let me have a thousand?"

"I have five hundred francs—no more," said the young man, very gravely.

"Give them to me; I will give you a written agreement to return them to you, with as much more as you choose

to demand. I will sign a receipt for five thousand francs. I did that with that odious Comtesse Manshauschen. She lent me, one night at Monaco, four thousand francs, and she holds my receipts for twenty thousand. Or—"

The young man stopped her. He feared lest Catherine's mother should utter some irrevocable word that should always remain as a barrier between them.

"You are willing, then, to sign a receipt for any sum I may choose to name?"

"Yes! yes! yes!"

"I do not want your money—give me Catherine—for my wife, you understand."

Madame Slavsky laughed nervously.

"What an idea! How absurd—"

"No, there is no absurdity in the notion," continued Ratier, opening his portemonnaie and showing the crisp notes to Barbe. "Here are the five hundred francs. Will you give me your daughter if she makes no objection?"

"The money!" cried Barbe, extending her hands; "the money!"

"Will you give me your daughter?" repeated Ratier. "I am rich; I have an income of sixty thousand francs. I give you my word that this is true, and if I prove it, will you promise that your daughter shall be my wife?"

"Yes."

"Here is the money."

Barbe snatched the notes and disappeared.

"Upon my word!" said Ratier, folding his arms, "that woman absolutely terrifies me. Suppose Rémisoff had

met her in this mood!" He shuddered. "After all," he added, slowly, "my journey has not been thrown away," and he too re-entered the Casino. In the second room he beheld Boleslas, who was playing as he had never before played in his life; no higher than five francs, and never upon a single number. He had regained his equanimity and some portion of his money. As to Barbe, she too was winning, and betrayed no signs of the agitation she had shown in the garden.

"What a woman!" said Ratier to himself, "what a mother-in-law for a man to have!"

Music from the concert room came to his ears, and Ratier obeyed its call. Madame Slavsky was on the way to rebuild the goodly structure of the shattered edifice of the fortune which had once that evening been hers, when the orchestra was heard—through some suddenly opened door probably — playing the barcarole in *Un ballo in maschero.*

"Eternally Verdi!" grumbled a German. Barbe looked at him fiercely; in the first place, she adored Verdi, and then this German had disorganized several of her combinations.

A tenor voice, fresh and young, of such extraordinary power that every one looked up, rang through the concert room, penetrated, and even filled the one where stood the green tables.

"Shut that door!" growled a gentleman who disliked music. The doors were closed, with the exception of the one which led to the garden, and which could not be closed

without transgressing the rules. The curtains alone were allowed to be drawn. The noise of the instruments became less loud, and the players were comparatively undisturbed. But suddenly, on some one coming in through the open door, was heard the most magnificent *ut* which had been heard from mortal chest since Duprez. Some few persons who had lost, and who were passably fond of music, took their way to the concert room. Presently such an uproar of applause was heard that others went to see what was going on.

"Make your play, gentlemen," said the dreary, monotonous voice of the croupier.

"It is the most extraordinary voice I ever heard!" said some one; "the most sympathetic!"

"An Italian?" asked some one else.

Madame Slavsky was absorbed, and fortune rewarded her assiduity. Suddenly she heard the tenor voice again; this time singing a French song with rare sweetness and wonderful execution.

Even the defects of the accompaniment could not weaken the effect produced. People hurried from the *salle de jeu.*

"I surely know that voice!" muttered Barbe. At this moment the Colonel started and looked at her.

"It is Ratier—I am sure!" he exclaimed.

Madame Slavsky shrugged her shoulders—what did she care?

Boleslas had another passion than that of play—he was music-mad. Ratier's voice disturbed him; he longed to

go to the music room, but he could not tear himself from the green cloth. Finally, when he had lost twice in succession, he rose, and with a glance of wonder at his fair friend, who cared not one sou for music, followed the voice.

It was Ratier—Ratier in his travelling-dress; he had found a pair of white gloves, and was singing for the widow and the orphan. His handsome, manly face was full of happiness. He was king of the world, and as he caught a glimpse of Boleslas, he actually had the audacity to wink at him!

"How perfectly at home he is!" said the Colonel.

Ratier had finished. The room was crowded with the most distinguished persons in the place, every one was enthusiastic, and Ratier was recalled.

He appeared, still, of course, in his checked suit, bowed profoundly with his hand on his heart, and backed off the stage.

"What a handsome fellow!" sighed a rosy English girl.

Boleslas went back to his work. Why had Ratier made a mystery of this great gift? He had known this young man five or six years; they had drunk many a bottle of wine together; smoked many a cigar, but he had never made an allusion to his voice, nor even to music. Why was this?

"I have always said that he was concealing something," thought Boleslas. But two thoughts at once were much more than the limited intelligence of our gallant Colonel

could endure, so he discarded one and took his chair at the table again.

Ratier was in the garden enjoying the enthusiastic reception which was afforded him. Amateurs crowded around him. He received them quite graciously. A good-looking Frenchman attached himself to his side with some pertinacity. He was the reporter of an influential paper, who had been despatched to ascertain the state of the works on the railroad of Saint Gothard, and to see, at the same time, if the season at Saxon was worth making an article about. Ratier had met him at the café.

"I came here," said the reporter, "to see if the place was amusing, and—"

"You did not find it so?"

"Not to me, for I lost considerable money. I telegraphed to the editor-in-chief, and he said that it was a good lesson for me. Here am I, due in Paris, and no money to get there."

"That is bad, to be sure. Tell me," said Ratier, "you think I have talent?"

"Most assuredly."

"And a fine voice?"

"Magnificent."

"Very well, I will allow you to write this to your journal. Say, moreover, that I am about to make my début."

"But when?" exclaimed the reporter.

"I will give you the date later. I give you full liberty to be as indiscreet as you please, and in return—"

"What will you do?"

"Release you from imprisonment," said Ratier.

"Ah! my dear friend, I am more grateful—"

"No gratitude, if you please, but an article, and a good one. Only remember, you must not know me when we meet. I am with people of the highest social position and I rely on your discretion—"

"Which will never fail you!" said the reporter.

"Be at the hotel then in an hour, and you can leave to-morrow."

The reporter turned on his heel, delighted—but came back in a moment—

"By the way," he said, "won't you lend me a louis to try my chance for the last time?"

Ratier laughed gayly, and handed him twenty francs. "Remember," he said, "that for this I want five lines more—well peppered with exclamation points, you understand."

The reporter nodded and disappeared between the striped portières.

Rémisoff was sulkily adding up figures on the back of an envelope; Ratier went towards him.

"How have you got on, my lad?" he said.

"I have lost—deuce take it—all the time."

"How much?"

"Three hundred and seventy-eight francs!"

"Is it possible! Poor Rémisoff!" said the young Frenchman, patting him gently on his back, as if he had been a faithful dog. "But I am glad you have lost—"

"Glad I have lost?"

"Yes; had you won, you would have begun again to-morrow morning; instead of which, having lost, we will all go off together by the first train, and you will never touch a roulette table again in your life. Three hundred and seventy-eight francs is paying for your experience very cheaply, considering that you are a man of fortune. And now give me back my fetish, since it has done you no good."

"Why give it back to you?" said the young Russian, cautiously.

"To make a cigarette—it was for that it was created!"

At this moment the Colonel staggered, rather than walked, past them—his face haggard and eyes wild.

"You have been losing, I fear," said Ratier, in a tone of respectful sympathy.

"All—everything—"

"Cheer up! you will have better luck another time, and now we had best be off to bed, as we must rise betimes."

"Let us wait over another train," insinuated the Colonel.

But Ratier was inflexible. Madame Slavsky bowed good-night without a word. Boleslas concluded that she had lost; in fact, she had told him so. This statement was sufficient in Ratier's mind to prove that she had been winning heavily.

Our friends therefore departed in the morning on the first train. Just as they reached Saint Germain, Boleslas cried out suddenly,

"Why did I not play on the treize? I see it all—all. The treize won twenty-four times during the evening."

"But not in succession!" said Barbe, who seemed half asleep, with her hands crossed over the little mysterious morocco bag.

"Not in succession, of course, but during the evening, I say. I made a great mistake in not playing on the treize. Our car bears the number thirteen; I was born on the thirteenth; my room at the hotel was thirteen. Why on earth was I so foolish?"

A prolonged silence was broken by Ratier uttering in a sepulchral voice the following aphorism:

"Yes, Colonel, always play on the thirteen—but only when it wins."

Boleslas looked at him, frowned and winked—tried to understand and then gave it up as hopeless.

They reached Paris, all of them weary, body and mind, with their journey, and each out of temper with the other.

Ratier bowed profoundly to Madame Slavsky, and said before they parted,

"I shall have the honor, madame, of wishing you good-morning; I shall call, shortly, to present my little bill—"

Barbe bowed haughtily and turned her back upon him —still with her travelling-bag in her hand.

On reaching home, Barbe was astonished to see the door opened by Miss Amroth, whose eyes were very red, and whose face was so swollen that she seemed to have passed the whole night in tears.

"Why do you open the door?" said Barbe, ungraciously, without saying even good-morning.

"Because I expected you, madame—"

"Where is the servant?"

"Mademoiselle sent her away."

"This is a pleasant state of things, upon my word!—and my daughter, where is she?"

Instead of replying, Miss Amroth burst into tears. These tears not being very satisfactory to Madame Slavsky, she seized the Irish woman by the arm.

"Where is my daughter?" she exclaimed, with so much austerity that the poor governess was compelled to reply.

"She has gone, madame."

"With whom?" said Barbe, aghast.

"Alone!"

"That is false!" cried Madame Slavsky. These words elicited another deluge of Irish tears and protestations. Seeing that she could obtain no explanation in this way, and deciding, moreover, that the staircase at six o'clock in the morning was not just the place to hear a story of this kind, Madame Slavsky turned abruptly and went to Katia's room.

It was true: the bird had flown. The little bed was all undisturbed. The mother's heart suffered a slight pang when she saw this vacant chamber. But as she was a woman of energy, she seated herself in an arm-chair and interrogated Miss Amroth.

"The Comtesse Manshauschen had come the evening

previous with General Thomine, and much astonished at not finding their friend at home, had invited themselves to take tea with Catherine, who did her best to receive them; but the General had been so extremely gallant that Mademoiselle had seemed much displeased. The Comtesse had laughed vociferously at this great joke, and finally the General had tried to take the young girl upon his knee—"

"What an old fool!" said Madame Slavsky, shrugging her shoulders.

"The Comtesse still laughed, which encouraged the General, and finally Miss Catherine grew so angry that she said several very rude things—and finally ordered both the lady and gentleman to leave the house. This order they laughed at and refused to obey, and the General ran into the dining-room to kiss Miss Catherine, who finally went into her own room and locked the door. The General and the Comtesse waited for her to come out, but she would not come, and at last they went away."

"The Comtesse shall pay for this," said Madame Slavsky between her set teeth. "And then?"

"Then Mademoiselle Catherine cried all night; and the next day, in the afternoon, she was just telling me to dress to go out with her, when the General walked in. The servant had foolishly said that mademoiselle was at home. I was not in the room, madame, so I do not know what happened. I heard a loud crash like china or glass falling, and found out afterward that it was the great India bowl on the centre-table. Mademoiselle Catherine flew out of the room, and as she saw the servant in the anteroom she

said, 'Leave the house instantly. I dismiss you.' The young lady then ran down the staircase, and, madame, I have never seen her since!"

The mother sat silent and pale. This story filled her with terror, but as she was one of those persons who always hope for the best, she did not allow herself to be utterly crushed.

"What did the General do?"

"He took his hat and swore like a trooper, madame. He ran after mademoiselle, but he might as well have run after a bird."

"And since then you have heard nothing of her? And have done nothing?"

"I went to the police, madame, and I went to the place where people are carried, you know, who are found dead."

Barbe shuddered. Destitute of all motherly feeling as she was, the idea of finding her daughter at the Morgue gave her a cold shiver. She dismissed the governess with a gesture, and in another half hour she herself went out, very simply dressed in black, to make inquiries. She was gone five hours. She had been everywhere, even to the Morgue, and returned pale and worn, looking ten years older, and without a clue.

She found a note awaiting her. Madame d'Haupelles wrote: "Come and see me at once."

Barbe hurried away again in obedience to this summons without a moment's delay.

Ratier's experience was something different. When

he arrived at his rooms from the railway station, his concierge, who loved him as much for his gayety as for the liberal *pour-boires* he received at his hands, said to him in a sleepy voice:

"There is something in your box for you, Monsieur Ratier."

The young man put his hand in and took out a letter. The envelope was thick and glossy, the writing elegant. Ratier entered his apartment, locked the door, threw on the floor his bag and stick, and took his seat in an easy-chair near the window. His heart beat quicker, for he had a presentiment that this letter came from Katia. He opened it and glanced at the signature. It was from Madame d'Haupelles, but the name told him nothing. He therefore began to read it from the commencement:

"MONSIEUR:

"A poor child, who is almost alone in the world, assures me that you are her best friend. Will you have the goodness as soon as you receive this letter to come to me, that we may consult together in regard to her."

This was all, and yet Ratier felt that the decisive hour had come. He rose and drew a long breath of relief. Catherine had faith in him—she had called him her friend. Dear child! He should receive her then from hands which were more respectable than those of her mother, for without knowing Madame d'Haupelles even by name, he was assured by the very prudence of her letter that she was a woman worthy of respect.

He looked at his watch. Half-past six! Notwithstanding the wish expressed by his new correspondent, he could not, with any propriety, disturb her at this hour. He threw himself on his bed, and as the clock struck nine he presented himself at La Rue de l'Université. Evidently the servants, at least, had been up a long time. The rooms were in the most punctilious order. Mentally, Ratier compared this with the *laisser-aller* of the life at Madame Slavsky's; but he had no time for longer reflection, for he was ushered into the presence of Madame D'Haupelles, who had just come in from morning prayers.

At the sight of this grave and dignified woman, Ratier felt that the position was a serious one. A woman of her age and position sending to him a summons thus urgent, indicated most exceptional circumstances. It was with great anxiety that he waited for her to speak.

"You come from Switzerland, I think," she said.

Ratier bowed.

"I arrived, madame, at four this morning; but I did not presume to present myself here earlier."

"Mademoiselle Slavsky is here," resumed Madame d'Haupelles.

Ratier started.

"Nothing has happened, I hope?" he said, with ill-restrained emotion.

"No misfortune, materially speaking," answered Madame d'Haupelles, her heart warming toward the young man. "She left her mother's house for excellent reasons—the best of reasons; but she is very well."

A silence followed. There are some things which it is almost impossible to put into words; and Madame d'Haupelles, woman of the world as she was, hardly knew what to say.

"You take much interest in this young person," she finally observed. "I believe even that you gave her the address of some kind people with whom she could take refuge in case of any difficulty. I have found out about them. You will excuse me, I am sure; your age and your manner of life make you a singular chaperon. I have been informed that this young couple are in every way to be respected; this solicitude for the fate of this young girl is altogether praiseworthy; but before we go any further allow me to ask what are its motives?"

"My motives, madame? Ah! they are very simple. Night before last at nine o'clock, at Saxon-les-Bains, I asked Madame Slavsky for her daughter's hand, and I obtained it for the consideration of a bank-note of five hundred francs—"

Madame d'Haupelles uttered an exclamation of disgust and reproach; Ratier, quite unmoved, but in the most deferential manner, continued:

"I lent this money to her at a moment when she had lost every sou; and I honestly believe, madame, that had I bargained with her, I could have obtained her consent on lower terms."

Madame d'Haupelles smiled faintly. This young man pleased her, with his frank gayety, which did not desert him in the face of the difficulties of the situation.

"You have her consent, then?"

"Yes, and hope that mademoiselle will ratify it. Then I shall go at once to Madame Slavsky, who in all probability will deny ever having given it, as she hates me with a bitter hatred—"

"And why?"

"Because she cannot find it in her heart to forgive me for having been of use to her more than once," answered Ratier, quietly.

Madame d'Haupelles knew the world; her smile showed that she appreciated this profoundly philosophical remark.

"But, sir," she said, resuming her customary gravity, "if Mademoiselle Slavsky is right in what she has told me, it was you who induced these people to go to Saxon for the purpose of gambling. This proceeding—of which I highly disapprove—ought to have a motive, and what?"

"I had two, madame," answered Ratier, with frank honesty. "The first was to procure a little repose for Mademoiselle Catherine, who had just received a very severe shock—"

Madame d'Haupelles signified that she was aware of the details. Katia evidently had made no concealment of the Rémisoff episode.

"And then," continued Ratier, "I had a vague hope that Madame Slavsky would need me, and that in this way I could obtain her consent—which she will of course retract, but it is something to have obtained it even once—and you see that I was correct in my idea."

It was a new experience to Madame d'Haupelles to see

a man take his future mother-in-law to Saxon-les-Bains, with the hope that she would lose money there at the gambling table; but evidently Ratier and his set were not to be judged by common rules, or by those which governed her own circle. She hesitated a moment, and then said:

"You wish to marry—that is wise; but, sir, what are your means of existence?"

"I should prefer, madame, not to state them; not that they are in any way reprehensible, but simply because just now, I attach to their concealment an especial importance. I have an income of two thousand francs—and about twelve thousand stowed away ready for an emergency—my marriage or my burial; but I do not regard these as constituting my means of living. Were this all, I should not have ventured to ask for Mademoiselle Slavsky's hand."

"But, monsieur," insisted Madame d'Haupelles, "it is absolutely impossible for me to continue this conversation if you will not confide to me this secret, which is of the greatest possible importance to all who love Katia."

"You are right, madame," said Ratier, after a pause. "Only promise me to say nothing to Katia, without my permission."

To this his hostess agreed, and the young man confided to her the grand secret which promised him both wealth and happiness. As she listened, she was more and more pleased by the charm of his manner, by his exceeding lovableness, and by the honest sincerity which breathed in every word. She was struck by this all the more that the

young man had more or less of the air of a Bohemian. He was blasé and experienced, and yet there was an under current in his nature of freshness and delicacy, which would have done credit to a girl. When he had disclosed all his plans, she rose to close the conference.

"Very well, sir; now I tell you frankly that I intend to discover all I can about you in every way. If all that you tell me is correct—if you are altogether that which you seem to me to be—I will do my best to dispose Madame Slavsky in your favor. Do not be hurt that I seem to doubt your veracity—a marriage is such a terrible thing, a thing of such immense importance, that—"

"I understand you, madame," replied Ratier, simply; and his smile was so gay that her poor tired heart basked in its brightness. He left her as happy as a lark—regretting only one thing—that he had not been able to see Catherine.

On his departure Madame d'Haupelles at once despatched her note to Madame Slavsky, who soon appeared. Notwithstanding the colossal self-possession which was hers, both by nature and by cultivation, Barbe entered the gloomy salon with anything but a placid brow.

In the first place she had not breakfasted, which weakened her ability to resist emotion; and then, being quite certain that she had found her daughter, she was mentally arranging in her behalf a little sermon, whose greatest merit was by no means its brevity.

Madame d'Haupelles received her with the utmost coldness, and at once Barbe understood that she knew the

whole story. "She would not otherwise venture to be so disagreeable," she said to herself. And aloud, she exclaimed:

"Ah! my dear friend, you know the misfortune which has befallen me, I see. Come to my help—exert your influence in the search—"

"Your daughter is here," said Madame d'Haupelles, with haughty dignity.

Barbe uttered a cry of joy and surprise, which was but half sincere, and then sank upon a chair and burst into tears. Real tears, be it understood, for since the early morning she had been really very unhappy.

"Where is she?" said the unhappy mother; "let me see her."

"You will see her in due time," answered her friend, quite unmoved; "let us talk first."

Madame Slavsky exerted a strong control over her nerves, wiped away her tears and listened seriously to the little sermon which Madame d'Haupelles now proceeded to preach to her.

"You have been shamefully remiss in all your duties as a mother," she began, in the soft, languid voice which was habitual to her. "You have brought up your daughter—who, in spite of your carelessness, is a most charming girl—with culpable negligence. Fortunately, you did not succeed in perverting her, in spite of the example you constantly gave her. Then, as the crowning feature of your neglect, you left her alone, without any protection against the infamous people whom you select as your friends. Of course, you know what took place in your house?"

"I do not know," said Barbe, with entire self-possession, "what statements my daughter may have seen fit to make to you. Like all girls of her age, she is prone to exaggeration. I simply know that she has seen fit to take *au sérieux* the harmless jokes, which, to be sure, were in the worst possible taste, that an old family friend had seen fit to indulge in. He undoubtedly believed himself authorized by his age and his—"

Madame d'Haupelles started to her feet.

"Your daughter is here with me," she said, sternly, to her ancient ally. "I shall keep her. Reclaim her, if you choose, by legal means—or rather attempt to do so, and I will go into the Courts and state the reasons that, in my opinion, justify me in keeping your child from you. I warrant you that the affair will be very public, and that I have witnesses to prove the truth of all which I shall feel it my duty to allege. Go, madame; I will not detain you."

Barbe was no little disturbed by this threat. Legal measures and witnesses were not to her taste. She ignored all this and resumed the conversation.

"General Thomine," she said, "was extremely impertinent, without doubt; but Katia is a very difficult girl to manage—she sees everything in a perverted sort of way. I am convinced that were she to repeat what took place in the presence of General Thomine, or even in that of the Comtesse, that you would see how much importance she has given to trifles—"

"And you would have the courage to ask her to do

this?" replied Madame d'Haupelles. "Ah, well, I have much to learn still of the world of to-day. To my mind a young girl's purity would be smirched by her putting such an occurrence into words, in such a way. Not for a fortune would I ask the details of such a melancholy and shameful incident. You see that we cannot agree; that there is no neutral ground on which we can stand. I shall keep your daughter. Good-morning."

Barbe burst into tears.

"After all the unhappiness which in my life I have been called upon to endure," she sobbed; "after so many cruel anxieties and wrongs, you can have the heart to treat me thus! I have one only daughter, and you would take her from me! Is it my fault that I have been unable to establish her in life? Is it, then, such a very easy thing to marry a daughter? Many a mother, in an infinitely better position than mine, has not succeeded; and yet I who have done my very best, am treated as if I were an unnatural wretch who cared nothing for her daughter's interests; and I have never refused an offer for her! I have accepted them, one after another! Could I do more? Is it my fault, that all these marriages have come to naught?"

Madame d'Haupelles listened to this extraordinary tirade with an occasional and involuntary shrug of her shoulders; seeing clearly that to talk to Barbe was a sheer waste of time. Finally, utterly weary, she said:

"Look here! You wish Catherine to marry? This you admit; but you cannot succeed in settling her. If

I find a desirable parti, what then? Will you accept him?"

"Ah! ha! I seem to see my way clear, now!" thought Madame Slavsky. "I knew that there was something hidden—some motive that I could not understand.

"Unquestionably," she said aloud; "every gift from your hand would be most gracious to me. But Catherine must marry a man of wealth. My finances are in a most lamentable condition. I have never been able to save anything; and I owe at least twenty thousand francs."

"No," said Madame d'Haupelles, "it is not you who owe them; it is your Colonel. But I really was not aware that you were married to him. You espouse all his interests, as if they were yours."

"Because," cried Barbe, with marvellous impudence, "because he espouses all mine."

"Then I suppose you mean that the man who marries Catherine must pay twenty thousand francs to the Colonel?"

Madame Slavsky objected to the word "pay," which was a trifle severe; but she thought there was a prospect of her getting twenty thousand francs, and only regretted that she had not said thirty thousand.

"No man in the world would accept such conditions," resumed Madame d'Haupelles; "and Catherine consequently will never marry."

Madame Slavsky shrugged her shoulders despairingly, and said quietly:

"This is our last hope!"

"At last, then," said Madame d'Haupelles, contemptu-

ously, "you show your cards; and I am glad of that! I like this infinitely better than your lamentations and fictitious tears. I know of a parti for your daughter. If, to-night, I have decided that he is in all respects eligible, I will give you five thousand francs—it is I, you understand, who give them; and I take them from the sum I have devoted to the relief of the poor; for Catherine, in spite of her silks and her laces, is poorer than the poorest of those whom I aid. You shall have five thousand francs for your written consent."

"That is not enough!" answered Barbe; "I should prefer to wait and run the chance of getting more!"

"General Thomine, perhaps, will give you a larger sum!" said her former friend, with such unmistakable scorn that Barbe saw she must lay down her weapons.

"But, as you refuse my offer, we will take our steps accordingly."

"You can do nothing without her father's consent," returned Barbe. "I hold it in blank; and with your laws you can do nothing without it."

"Very well; if you wish to contest this point, do so. But upon my word your conduct is most strange. You may possibly obtain more than I offer; but you may also be compelled to wait a long time. Send me, to-night, your consent, and that of your husband, with the name to be filled in at my discretion, and I will return you, within the hour, five thousand francs—"

"How can I do that? Do you suppose that I do not wish to know who is to marry my daughter?"

"I dare say; but that point is not yet altogether settled. Do you agree? I will tell you the name to-morrow, when everything is decided."

Barbe hesitated for a moment longer.

"I agree," she said; "but I shall take my daughter away with me?"

"Not so," answered Madame d'Haupelles. "She remains here."

"Then I ask time for reflection," said Barbe, rising to take her leave; "your conditions are ungenerous. I will send my reply."

She left the house in such a passion, that, had Catherine chanced to come in her path, the child might have suffered some physical injury.

The Colonel, in a fit of intense depression, was seated in a huge arm-chair by the window of his cheerful room, in the Hôtel de Bade. He was turning over in his mind every possible prospect, when his charming friend entered like a whirlwind. He listened, with astonished ears, to all that had happened in his brief absence from Paris. Barbe poured out her wrongs, and the poor Colonel heard the words, "fools, rascals, knaves, and wretches," in such rapid succession, that he began to think he had fallen among brigands.

Fortunately, by the time she had finished, Boleslas began to have a faint idea of what she was talking about. He discovered that the wretch was Catherine; the knave, the Countess; the rascal was the General; and the fool was himself; and he at once proceeded to signify

his approval of the energetic language of his fair friend.

"And now, what is to be done?" asked Barbe, who felt that she had done her duty, and that he grasped the situation.

"Do? Why, accept the five thousand francs," said the Colonel, without a moment's hesitation.

Barbe, who probably had more in her little bag at that moment, told him that the amount offered was absurdly small, and the Colonel's zeal misplaced.

"Why did you ask my advice?" cried the miserable man.

"I don't know," said Barbe, angrily, as she disappeared through the door, leaving the Colonel utterly bewildered by the host of new ideas and events thus presented to him.

Barbe went directly to the hotel, where the General and Comtesse were temporarily residing. Among other extraordinary habits was that which this lady had formed, of never going away unless accompanied by some friend. Barbe had more than once been that friend. It was infinitely more economical than for her to pay the bills herself. On this occasion it happened to be General Thomine.

Barbe was received in the salon which belonged to the General—the Comtesse adroitly arranging it in such a way that she had the constant use of the salon. The way in which she did this was simple enough, after all. Small sleeping-rooms, on either side of the salon, allowed both parties to make use of it.

"I cannot imagine," said Madame Slavsky, as she swept into the room, "how you dare to look me in the face after what has passed."

"Is she found?" asked the Comtesse, not without some secret anxiety; for if the affair got bruited about, this, joined to several other peccadilloes, more or less serious in their nature, might quite possibly make a longer sojourn uncomfortable in this, the most enchanting city in the world.

"She is found. Yes, certainly. But how could you, at your age, countenance such follies?"

"At my age! We are the same age, my dear friend."

"There is a difference of ten years at least," answered Madame Slavsky, disdainfully. "You were thirty years old when I was married; you must not say that to me, therefore. But in my house and in my absence—"

"You should not have left her then," returned the Comtesse, angrily—she being vexed by the allusions to her age. "You may possibly learn some time how to take care of your daughter."

"Upon my word!" sneered Madame Slavsky, "lessons of this kind come well from your lips."

"Before quarrelling, my dear friend—for far be it from me to refuse you such a pleasure, if you desire it—have the goodness to pay me the money which you owe me. It happens that I am just now very short."

Madame Slavsky's anger fell flat like an omelette soufflé attacked by a spoon.

"Do not be troubled," she said, in a low voice, "you will be paid some time or another."

"And the sooner the better. I wish to have our accounts settled."

"The sum I owe is of trifling importance," replied Barbe, resuming the offensive; "you expect preposterous interest, and I shall not yield to your demands."

"No hard words, if you please; I am no usurer."

"Is it not usury to expect of me three hundred francs for every one hundred you lent?"

"If I asked high interest," returned the Comtesse, "it was not my fault. To enable me to lend you this money I was forced to borrow it myself precisely at the same rate; I, therefore, have not made one centime, and I have suffered every possible inconvenience and annoyance. Besides, I did not go down on my knees to you."

"Alas!" said Barbe to herself, "what a fool I was!" Then suddenly remembering what had happened at Saxon, she was seized by a feeling of rage against the young man.

"He shall suffer well for his conduct, at least," she thought, and she beat a rapid retreat, returning to her rooms with a feeling that she had been conquered.

The sun, as the poets say, declined in the horizon, and Barbe, who had eaten nothing all day, decided that it was quite time for dinner, but just as she was going out again to a restaurant, a visitor rang, and Miss Amroth, who performed for the nonce all the duties of soubrette, opened the door, and announced Monsieur Ratier.

Of all people in the world, Ratier was precisely the man whom Madame Slavsky was most desirous to attack.

The antipathy she had always felt toward the young man had assumed, since the previous evening, the most violent proportions. If the pleasantry were not so worn out and exhausted by the very newspapers who now condemn the heartlessness and immorality of these jests on the relations between son and mother-in-law, we should say that, in Ratier, Madame Slavsky had unconsciously detected her future son-in-law, and hated him in advance.

However this may be, it was certainly with the strongest possible dislike that Madame Slavsky received the young man, and with the utmost discourtesy said:

"It is you, is it?"

Up to this time her daughter and her dear Boleslas were the only persons who had seen her in one of these moods.

"Yes, madame, it is I. I trust that I have not kept you waiting."

"Waiting! By no means. I am just going to dinner," answered Barbe, turning her back upon him, and going to the mirror to arrange her hat.

Ratier quietly seated himself. Madame Slavsky, seeing this in the mirror, turned toward him with her most haughty air. The excellent youth smiled upon her with the most angelic sweetness.

"You came for your five hundred francs, I presume," said his hostess, with the most aristocratic disdain; "here they are."

She opened her portemonnaie, and took out a bank-bill

which she held out to Ratier; but seeing that he did not move to take it, she opened her fingers and allowed it to fall to the floor. She looked fiercely at the young man; he continued to beam upon her.

"Well!" she said—this one word signified, "Pick up your money and go."

"No, madame, you are mistaken," he said, slowly. "I did not come for five hundred francs;" and then, in the most suave tones, he added, "I came for Mademoiselle Catherine."

"This is a very poor jest, let me tell you, sir; let us drop it, if you please.

"I beg your pardon, madame, it is no jest whatever. Take notice, if you please, that I am wearing a dress suit, an extraordinary costume at this hour and at this season of the year. The great importance of this occasion on which I present myself to you, is my only excuse for my apparent violation of decorum. I came, madame, to ask for the honor of your daughter's hand."

"Who most assuredly will not marry a—"

"A what? dear lady?"

"A gambler. A man of no social position, of questionable associates. A man—"

"Is it because I glory in numbering the Colonel among my friends—the Colonel, who did me the honor to present me to you—that you judge me with such severity?" replied Ratier, with the most excessive urbanity.

Barbe bit her lips until the blood came.

"You are without fortune," she said.

"I beg your pardon. Will you grant me Mademoiselle Catherine's hand on condition of my satisfying you that I have an income of sixty thousand francs?"

"Who could marry a man called Ratier?" cried Barbe, exasperated beyond all bounds.

"The name is of little consequence," replied our hero, carelessly. "I am going to Italy; I could easily be called *il Signor conte Ratiero*—upon my word, madame, I am infinitely obliged for the suggestion—it will look marvellously well on my visiting cards!"

"I will not have you, sir," said Barbe, with deliberate coolness, "either for a son-in-law, or for—"

"You did not talk thus at Saxon," answered the young man, entirely undisturbed.

Barbe looked round the room. In her blind fury she could have killed him then and there, if a weapon had then presented itself ready to her hand, and if she could have done it noiselessly; for Barbe objected to publicity in any and all of her little amusements.

"I leave the room to you," she said, going toward the door.

The folds of her dress struck the bank-note; the light breeze from her drapery wafted it toward the window. Mechanically, but eagerly, she stooped and picked it up. Her eyes, as she raised her head, met those of Ratier, who still sat on the sofa.

"You acknowledge yourself conquered, then, madame?" he said, in his calmest voice. "Of course, if you take back this money, you give up the game. You will do well to

yield with a good grace. You know where your daughter is?"

"Can it be possible," cried Barbe, with a nervous laugh, "that you are the man whom Madame d'Haupelles had in view?" She thrust a chair aside at this moment with such angry energy that it fell over upon the floor. "Ah! this is quite too much!"

"Yes, dear madame, I am the man. If you give your consent, we can at once come to an amicable understanding. If you refuse, on the contrary, open war is declared between us; and you have no strength on your side, since you love money, and I love your daughter! We will wait, in that case, until Katia is old enough to marry without your consent; or we can easily find a priest in Poland who will not be tenacious on that point. I am quite willing to go to Varsovei, if it be expedient. Money is of no value to me, except as it brings me happiness."

He looked the woman, who stood leaning against a table, full in the face. She could not endure this, and her eyes dropped.

"Let there be peace between us, dear madame," said Ratier, kindly.

"I must see Madame d'Haupelles," murmured Barbe, evasively.

"So be it. When shall I have your answer?"

"To-morrow evening."

"That is too long. Say to-morrow noon."

Madame Slavsky made no reply.

"All right!" said Ratier to himself; "to make no objection is in itself an assent. Very well, then," he answered aloud. "To-morrow at twelve I will present myself to receive from you your consent in due form. Madame d'Haupelles understands fully the condition of my circumstances: she will give you all necessary information."

He bowed and left her. She was white with rage and made no reply. When she was alone in the room she walked up and down its length several times, with the bank-note crushed in her hands. She suddenly stopped, looked at it, and came to the conclusion that five hundred francs were not to be treated thus disrespectfully. She smoothed it out carefully, placed it in her portemonnaie, and went out to dine with Boleslas.

Ratier was right. He was the stronger; for she loved money. Before eight o'clock he was again at Madame d'Haupelles' door, with a heart beating as never before. Little did he now care for Barbe and her impotent anger. How utterly contemptible did her rage and harsh words seem to him in the presence of this calm and dignified woman, who received him with gentle courtesy. It was she who seemed to him to be Catherine's real mother—it was from her hands that he was to receive his fair young wife.

The room was illuminated only by a well-shaded lamp upon a table, the light from which fell, not upon the face, but on two slender hands fluttering over an embroidery frame. He hesitated—hardly daring to advance.

"Come in," said Madame d'Haupelles, from the dark corner, where she sheltered her eyes, eyes which had wept too much to bear the light.

He approached her, and bowed over the hand she extended. He felt vulgar, coarse and awkward, and would have liked to have been five hundred feet below the turf. But, as he lifted his head, he saw Katia's sweet face all covered with blushes. She had laid aside her work; her hands trembled too much to hold the needle.

"You will permit me, madame," said Ratier, "to pay my respects to your ward?"

"I cheerfully accord you my permission, sir, and while waiting that of her mother—which will undoubtedly arrive in due time—I will even allow you to say to Katia all that you have in your heart and upon your lips."

Again did Ratier lift the frail fingers of his new friend to his lips with respectful deference; then turned back to Catherine.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "we made the acquaintance of each other in dark days, but we can, I think, be happy together. Will you consent to share my life?"

Katia tried to speak, but it was impossible. This respect, these words of vailed tenderness were in such strange contrast to the insults to which she had been recently subjected, that she was utterly overwhelmed. Tears rushed to her eyes, and hung on her long lashes.

"I am able to offer you all which you once said was an essential to your happiness," continued Ratier, somewhat disturbed by her long silence. "You told me once that you would never marry any one who was not very wealthy."

"What does wealth matter?" cried Katia, rising hastily from her chair, and impulsively placing both hands in his. "Money brings misery, it seems to me. I do not wish for money!"

"Do you hear that, madame? She does not wish for money. But, dear child, you will have it, nevertheless. I am rich, Katia; I have an engagement at La Scala—sixty thousand francs per annum, with a vacation of two months. We will travel everywhere, Katia—everywhere."

"At La Scala?" asked Catherine, vaguely. "At the theatre?"

"Yes, my child—my fairest one! I shall appear in every opera that was ever heard of: Il Trovatore, Hernani, Guillaume Tell, and The Huguenots—all in Italian, mind you. You shall not sink in the social scale either, chèrie. Mario is a Count, and Adelina Patti a Marquise. You shall be the happiest and the most beautiful of women. Do you consent?"

"I should have infinitely preferred," said Katia, coloring, "that you should have remained poor."

"She is charming!" said Ratier, enthusiastically; "is she not charming?" he repeated, turning to Madame d'Haupelles.

"Indeed she is," answered that lady, sympathetically.

Ratier obtained permission to install himself at the small table, under the tranquil light of the shaded lamp. There he sat and talked with Catherine of their future, and, oddly enough, the presence of Madame d'Haupelles, felt rather than seen, as she sat buried in her fauteuil, did not in the least mar his happiness. He felt himself happy near this young girl—happy in making their plans with her and for her; but he was happier still in feeling that this pale, gentle woman sat near by, listening to them and looking at them with her sad eyes. It seemed to him that he had found a real mother, his own and Catherine's.

They enjoyed an hour of this unutterable peace, when Madame Slavsky appeared. She had had time to compose her nerves and regain her ordinary manner; but she gave, nevertheless, an angry start when she saw Ratier thus familiarly established.

Madame d'Haupelles rose to receive her with all the politeness entailed upon her by Catherine's presence. Barbe approached her daughter, kissed her ceremoniously on the brow, made a slight inclination to Ratier, who bowed deferentially, and then took a seat near her hostess, and disposed her drapery gracefully around her in her low chair.

"She is superb!" thought Ratier, filled with admiration at this irreproachable bearing. "She does not look as if, within the last few hours, she had picked up from the floor a bank-note of five hundred francs! Our family circle

gradually assembles about us! We need now only the Colonel's presence."

"You see, my dear, I took it upon myself," said Madame d'Haupelles, "to authorize these young people to talk together."

Madame Slavsky looked at Ratier, from head to foot, with the most supercilious expression.

"You have brought the consent, I trust," continued Madame d'Haupelles.

"There it is!" said Barbe, as with a tragic air she handed a paper to her hostess.

Madame d'Haupelles examined it, and seeing that one document in a foreign language, bearing the signature of Catherine's father, was fastened with a pin to another, where Madame Slavsky's name appeared, she placed it in a desk at her side, and handed to Barbe in return, a sealed envelope. This lady, with a gesture common to all who receive money, took it with apparent carelessness, but in reality handled it in such a way that she could feel its contents, which had that charming rustle peculiar to bank-notes.

Knowing as she did her friend's integrity, a more rigorous examination was unnecessary. She quietly slipped it into her pocket, the diamonds on her beautiful hand glittering as she did so. She had bought back her jewels, it seems, on leaving Saxon.

"Then," said Madame d'Haupelles, "the necessary papers may be at once drawn up."

Barbe shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

This silence irritated her hostess, who saw in it only another indication of worthlessness of character. She rang. Tea was brought, with which Catherine immediately occupied herself, with the sweet consciousness that her lover's eyes followed her every movement.

Her grace was so charming, that any other heart than her mother's would have been moved by it. But Madame Slavsky however, was impenetrable.

"My daughter goes home with me to-night," she said, as she placed her empty cup on the mantel.

Katia started, and turned an imploring look upon her protectress, who at once said:

"Can you not be persuaded to leave her with me? We are very happy together, and she inconveniences me in no way."

"I have consented to all you desired," said Barbe, meaningly; "but I must have my daughter. Remember that, at the best, I have but a brief time to enjoy her society."

Madame d'Haupelles made another effort, but Barbe said, simply:

"Unless she goes, my consent is void."

"Go, my child," said Madame d'Haupelles, sadly. "Summon my maid, and make your little arrangements."

Katia left the salon slowly and sadly.

"Madame," said Ratier to his future mother-in-law, "you will permit me to see Mademoiselle Catherine?"

"You will have ample time to see her and devote your-

self to her when you are married," answered Barbe. "You know that I cannot endure you. Have the goodness, therefore, not to inflict your presence upon me."

"You can see Catherine here," said Madame d'Haupelles.

Again did Madame Slavsky shrug her shoulders. Her old ally watched her distrustfully.

Catherine reappeared, and her mother took her away at once. Ratier placed them in their carriage and then returned to say a word of adieu to the kind friend whom Heaven had so mercifully sent to their aid.

"I fear some trickery," she said. "There is something wrong. Keep your eyes open and watch carefully."

"What do you fear?" asked Ratier, with a pang at his heart.

"That she intends to go away."

"She has no money."

"I have just given her five thousand francs."

"Ah, madame, you have made a frightful blunder," cried Ratier, starting to his feet. "I beg ten thousand pardons; I did not intend to blame you, or to speak with disrespect; but Madame Slavsky can only be managed by keeping her low in funds."

"You are right, and I realized my mistake when I saw her take her daughter away. You must remedy my error in any fashion you please, and at any cost of either time or money."

"Many thanks, dear madame," said Ratier. "You have a mother's heart."

These words caused Madame d'Haupelles to spend the night in bitter weeping.

Ratier hurried away and questioned the concierge in the hotel as to which was Madame Slavsky's apartment. He learned that the ladies had just come in, and, tranquillized by this intelligence, he went off to bed.

It was not probable, after the sleepless nights Barbe had recently passed, that she would attempt an immediate flitting. But he promised himself to be early on the watch in the morning.

When Madame Slavsky opened her door, she was met on the threshold by Miss Amroth, who showed all the joy of a faithful dog who has found its master. This exposition was cut short, and the poor woman ignominiously dismissed by her mistress, who led Katia into the salon, and, closing the door carefully, took her seat on the sofa and said to Catherine:

"Will you explain to me the meaning of all this?"

The young girl did not answer. In the first place this question was too comprehensive to be easily covered; then she had so much to say that she dared not begin. She therefore stood with bowed head, awaiting the storm.

"You think seriously, then, of marrying this man—this—Ratier, I think is his name?" asked Barbe, uttering this plebeian cognomen with the utmost contempt.

"Yes, mamma," answered Catherine.

"Your tastes are certainly extremely elevated! I beg to assure you that I will never have a son-in-law who is called Ratier, however."

"I thought you had given your consent!" exclaimed Catherine, growing very pale, for she saw an abyss of horror opening before her.

"What you thought is of no consequence to me, and what I do is of no consequence to you," said her mother. "What on earth induced you to listen to the proposals of a man of such low birth?"

"Because I love him," answered the girl, courageously.

"You love him! How very touching! Is it his accomplished manners which have won your heart? Or may I venture to ask if it is the brilliant future which he offers you? Or again, is it his intellect?"

"It is because I respect, as well as love him"—answered her daughter, goaded to frankness by these sarcasms, and raising her head, but by no means her voice, which was perfectly gentle and submissive;—"because he is good and wise, kind and honest; because I see that, unlike all the men I have previously known, he respects, instead of despising me."

"Despising you! Who has despised you?"

Catherine looked at her mother; her great eyes flamed; she hesitated; her lids fell, extinguishing their fire, as she answered in a low voice:

"It is useless for me to tell you, mamma. Do not ask me!"

Madame Slavsky bit her lips. This was an unexpected turn to the conversation. But she was by no means routed: she therefore promptly answered:

"Why did you leave my house like an adventuress?"

Katia's pride revolted at these words—she could not contain herself.

"Because adventurers came here!" she said, quickly.

Madame Slavsky started to her feet, with a raised hand; only the thought that other people would know it, restrained her from striking her daughter.

"Whom do you stigmatize by that title?" she said, putting the greatest possible restraint upon herself to speak calmly.

"The Comtesse and the General."

"Say what you please about the Comtesse," replied her mother, "but speak of the General with respect."

"Respect! Speak of a man who behaved towards me as he did, with respect?" cried Catherine, trembling from head to foot with youthful indignation.

"Yes, because he is one of my friends; and I choose you to speak respectfully of my friends."

"Select better ones then!" cried Catherine. "This man, whom you call your friend, has grossly insulted me —to that degree that I was obliged to take refuge in flight."

"That is absolute nonsense! You wished to make a great scandal, and you have succeeded. But I should be by no means proud of it!" exclaimed her mother.

"You do not know all that happened," answered Catherine, covering her face with her hands, and shuddering as she thought of the scene.

Madame Slavsky realized, for the first time, that her daughter had been indeed gravely insulted; a fact which

up to this moment she had rejected as absolutely impossible.

"If you wish me to forgive you," she said, in a gentle voice, "tell me what happened."

"Never!" cried Catherine, "never! It is too much that I should have been compelled to undergo, without the pain of describing it."

Madame Slavsky's jealousy took fire.

"You told Madame d'Haupelles, and of course you can tell me!"

"It is not the same thing," said Catherine, quickly. And then checking herself, lest she should wound her mother, she said: "It was here, in this room; I broke the china bowl; I threw it in his face; I would have killed him; he was frightened, and he let me go."

She shuddered, and seemed to feel again the insolent hands of the old man on her slender waist and delicate throat.

Madame Slavsky did not speak. This horror felt by Catherine for the General deranged all her combinations. While she sat at dinner with Boleslas, the General had made his appearance, and had apologized for his folly. In what terms he had done this, and what defensive and offensive alliance had been formed between these three virtuous personages, we cannot inform our readers, as no short-hand reporter had taken them down.

Josia, who went into the café just at the termination of the interview, heard only these last words from the General:

"A man may be stupid, without necessarily being bad.

We will talk the matter over to-morrow, if in the meantime you will take my proposition into consideration."

Finding any further discussion hopeless, Barbe suddenly looked up at her daughter.

"Good-night! Madame Ratier. What a beautiful name that is!—Madame Ratier!"

"It is at all events an honorable one," answered her daughter, prudently escaping through the door.

And at last Barbe decided to try and sleep, and sleep she did; to awake at nine o'clock, just as the sun, which up to that hour had been shining brightly, was veiled in a thick fog. Barbe was by no means superstitious; it had even been said of her, that but for Monaco and Saxon she would have been an *esprit fort;* she therefore paid only attention enough to the weather to say:

"More rain; thick-soled boots to-day, then."

Barbe left her room to see that her daughter was in hers, directed Mademoiselle Amroth to make some chocolate, and then proceeded to the serious duties of the toilette. Miss Amroth, who had lighted the gas in the kitchen, began to scrape the chocolate meekly, in which interesting employment Katia came soon to join her. While life at La Rue Merosmesnil went on thus calmly, Ratier had risen at a most unconscionable hour. Before the clock struck six he was knocking at Josia's door after a fashion that would have aroused the dead. Josia therefore awoke, opened the door, and stood in open-mouthed astonishment on seeing Ratier.

"The Colonel is on the lower floor," said the youth.

"Wake up, my lad! It is you, not the Colonel, whom I wish to see. I want to hear from you what has been going on in La Rue Merosmesnil—and, first, where is Miss Catherine?"

"Is she not at home?"

"Now she is. But yesterday morning no one knew where she was."

"What on earth has happened?" cried Josia, raising his thin arms to heaven.

Ratier hastened to put him *au courant* with all that it was necessary for him to know, and concluded with the words:

"And in three weeks she will be Madame Ratier."

"Are you going to marry her?" asked Josia, aghast.

"Forgive me, my dear friend; I had forgotten!" And Ratier was sincerely grieved at his own thoughtlessness.

"Yes, Ratier, I know that you would not intentionally wound me; and as soon as I have recovered from my surprise I will congratulate you. Indeed, I am not sorry. I would rather it would be you than any man I know, I do assure you."

"What a good fellow you are!" murmured Ratier, much touched. "What a pity it is that there are not two Catherines!"

"I am glad," said Josia, "because you will be good to her."

"I mean to be," said Ratier, suddenly growing very grave. "And now, Josia, I came to you, that you with me might take certain precautions to secure her safety."

"But if she is to marry you, she has nothing more to fear."

"You do not know that mother of hers—my dear fellow, your veneration blinds you to her infamy. At ten o'clock yesterday evening she gave her consent, and at eleven took it back!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the secretary.

"This is the note that an unknown woman—Miss Amroth, probably—gave my concierge this morning at daybreak—he brought it up to me at once."

This note was to the following effect:

"My mother declares that I shall never be your wife. I am convinced that she means to leave Paris. Do not desert me. "KATIA."

"Poor child! No, indeed, we will watch over her, Josia. You and I, Josia. She has evidently passed the night in bribing her Irish governess. How on earth the child obtained my address is quite beyond my comprehension. It was possibly Madame d'Haupelles who gave it to her."

But to procure this address Catherine had no need to turn to any one. Ever since the conversation at the Palais Royal she had preserved one of the young man's visiting cards—preserving it as that of her only friend. Young girls often have such notions.

"And now, Josia, you must take up your quarters at that café, indifferent as is the fare; you must take a car-

riage by the day. There is a certain rémise whose driver I know to be faithful; I shall order him to take his stand at the door of that café. At the least suspicious movement in the besieged house you are to send me a line by a commissionaire, whom I have often employed, and whom I shall order to be on hand at the wine-shop. I shall be found always, when I am not with you, at Madame d'Haupelles', or at my rooms."

"And what should I do if you could not be found—if you were at neither of these places?"

"I cannot provide, my dear fellow, for such a contingency; in that case you must do as you think best. If you cannot do better, you must follow Catherine to the ends of the earth, if necessary—in a carriage or by railroad, and telegraph me at each place you reach. If you can take her away yourself from her mother, carry her to Madame Féraud's, at Montmartre."

He wrote down the address with scrupulous care, and gave it, with a well-filled pocket-book, to Josia, who, somewhat disturbed at his responsibility, was yet elated at the thought of being useful to Katia. Ratier then left him, with a parting injunction to keep himself in concealment.

The Colonel waited all day for Josia, who never appeared. The waiter at the hotel, when interrogated, stated that Monsieur Josia had been out since a very early hour. Boleslas concluded that his well-intentioned secretary was trying to borrow money, and repaired to breakfast with a hearty appetite.

About ten o'clock, Barbe had taken her chocolate,

Katia the same, when General Thomine was announced. At the sound of his voice the girl turned deadly pale and started to her feet, and then took refuge in her room, standing, with her hand on her heart, panting like a hunted deer; the locked door failing to inspire her with a sense of security.

Madame Slavsky smiled blandly upon the new-comer.

"Well!" said the General, "what have you decided upon?"

"I have received a proposal for my daughter's hand," replied Barbe; "and I acknowledge to you—"

"A proposal since last evening?" asked General Thomine, distrustfully.

"Yes—on leaving you—and this—"

"Well—I am willing to marry Catherine. What should prevent me, after all? To be sure, she is a good many years younger than I, but that will make no great difference. What do you say, my good friend?"

"Wait a while. The young man who wishes to marry my daughter is thoroughly aware of the embarrassing position in which I find myself. He knows my great affection for my child, and the regret I feel in parting from her. Therefore, to relieve my anxieties, he has offered to pay all my debts."

"Poor fellow!" thought the General; "little does he know what he has undertaken. But there is not one word of truth in the whole story. There is not in the whole world a man simple enough to propose to pay Barbe's debts!"

"All of them?" he said aloud.

"Of course—and a proposal like this deserves to be taken into consideration!"

"I should say so, indeed! You never will have a second offer like it. I advise you to accept it; and whomsoever this young man may be, dear friend, have the goodness to see that he settles our little affair—the three thousand roubles which I lent you at Monte Carlo. I am a little short just now, and shall be more than glad to have it!"

Barbe did not speak.

"And you?" she said at last; "what will you give?"

"What will I give? This is a new way of putting it! You have talked to me so long of your wish to see your daughter married and settled, that I really thought I was doing you the greatest possible service in taking her off your hands."

"Let us drop the subject," said Barbe, haughtily. "I regret that we touched upon it, but—"

"You owe me three thousand roubles—we will call it ten thousand francs. If I give you this amount for Katia, it seems to me that I am doing very well—"

"But, General, the money I owe you—"

"You have no intention of paying! I know that very well. But they enter none the less into my calculations. Come, Barbe, yield with a good grace, and let us close the negotiation."

Madame Slavsky struggled a little longer, but she soon saw that it was of no use: she had no choice but to yield.

She felt sure, too, that after the marriage she could obtain money from him from time to time, while from Ratier she felt certain that any such expectations would be useless. And then her strongest reason of all remains to be told: her hatred of Ratier had assumed such gigantic proportions, that she was overjoyed at the prospect of making him miserable; and to do this she was willing to give her daughter to the General!

"And when shall the marriage take place?" asked Thomine, gayly, when these pleasing performances were all completed.

"As soon as you please, but not at Paris," answered the happy mother.

"And why, pray?"

"Because I do not wish to have any further annoyance, and your lovely Comtesse—you know—"

"Oh! she is good-natured enough! Do you think that she will care?"

"I don't know—but that liason must be broken off—and before the marriage, you understand."

"Very well!" answered the General, with a nod. "Then, perhaps, you had best go to Germany to the baths, and I will follow you a week later. When will you start?"

"In an hour!"

"So soon as that? What bee have you got in your bonnet, Barbe?"

"If I linger in Paris, the young man who has addressed my daughter, or rather, who wishes to address her, will

torment me with entreaties. And to leave at once will put an end to his lamentations, or at all events to my hearing them."

How clever you are, my fair friend! There is probably something more that you do not choose to tell me. But remember, that I am an old fox not easily deceived. But no matter! Deceive me if you will: I am sure that your daughter will never deceive me. That girl is an absolute prude—upon my word, Barbe, she would have liked to kill me, I honestly believe— By the way, Barbe, are you quite sure that she is your daughter?"

As he uttered these words the General kissed the hand of his future mother-in-law, who was at least fifteen years younger than himself. Madame Slavsky was very angry, but she saw fit to conceal this anger, as she had another point to gain.

"To go off in this way is an easy thing to do with money; but without?—you know I was utterly ruined at Saxon."

"You wish me to pay in advance, I see; and suppose you should back out from your part of the bargain? You need not be offended, Barbe; it is a thing which is done every day in our highest circles. I have a thousand francs in my pocket—will you have them?"

"What can one do with a thousand francs?" answered Barbe, with a disdainful shrug of her handsome shoulders; "and then, too, what is to become of Boleslas?"

"He can join you later, I presume. Do not be troubled

about him. I fancy he is of an age to be trusted to buy his railroad ticket alone. However, I will look out for him, and will bring him along with me. Will that suit you?"

No; Madame Slavsky was not suited, but she condescended to pretend to be so.

"May I see my charming fiancée this morning?" asked the General, arranging his cravat.

"Frankly, General, after your conduct of the other night, I think it would be best to let her alone for a time. Do you yourself think you would be well received?"

"But as I am to marry her—?"

"You must let me have twenty-four hours to prepare her for this idea, which has never entered her head."

"But she wishes to marry. She has said so a hundred times. I have heard her say she would marry any man with money and a good position. I have both. I am not young, to be sure, but that won't make any great difference, I fancy."

"And yet—"

"Let me tell you what I mean. She is a sensible little girl, and knows how to take care of herself. She has said over and over again, without mincing the matter, 'I wish to marry a man of wealth, because I like all that wealth brings—I am fond of luxury.' There is not a particle of romance and sentimentality in her. She never cared to sit by the hour and look at the moon on the water! She is not of that stamp of woman—no romance about

her! Such women as she, provided you give them all the *chiffons* they want, behave well through life, and never tarnish the names they bear. That is what I want; and, besides, she is mighty pretty and dainty!"

"Thank you, General; I am glad you have explained your motives to me thus clearly. Now go, and let me attend to my packing. Little as I require, to go about the world with, I must still have that little."

"And I am not to see Katia?"

"Not unless you wish another china bowl broken on your head!"

"Upon my word!" sighed the General, "it is pretty hard, but I submit. I never did like to hear the jingle of broken crockery! Farewell, then, my gracious mother-in-law."

Madame Slavsky gave him the name of the town and the hotel where they should meet, and the General departed, not, however, without another protest against her cruelty.

When the door closed behind him, Madame Slavsky went to her daughter's room; Katia was sitting by the open window: and turned, ready for the coming battle.

"We are going away," said her mother; "make your preparations at once."

"Going away!" repeated Catherine, whom nothing now astonished. "Where are we going?"

"To the German baths. Hasten, Katia; you have no time to lose; the train leaves in two hours."

"Mamma," said the girl, "does Monsieur Ratier know that we are going?"

"You bore me to death with your constant talk about Ratier; no more arguments, but hasten. Decide what you wish to take. One trunk and a bag—that is all the luggage you can have."

Barbe left the room, and her daughter stood helpless. Miss Amroth had told her that the General had been a long time with her mother, and she felt sure that some great disaster was impending. She knew, too, that he left the house on the best of terms with her mother, for she had heard their voices in the anteroom. This sudden departure following so quickly therefore, upon their interview struck her as full of menaces.

She looked out the window. It was raining. When one is in good spirits, a rainy day is depressing enough, but when one is sad, it is heart-breaking. But to refresh her eyes, which were hot and dry from her sleepless night, she leaned against the window and looked out into the street. She noticed that the same carriage had been standing all the morning at the café opposite. There was nothing very strange or very exciting in that. But after a moment or two she saw Josia go in. She watched, and presently he reappeared; said a few words to the man on the box of this mysterious carriage, who sat motionless, and, wrapped in his huge coat of white India-rubber, looked much like a statue prepared for a funereal monument—a symbolic Pity or Charity, or some one of the sister Virtues. After a short colloquy, Josia entered the

café, and a waiter brought out to the coachman something in a glass, which he swallowed with avidity.

"Josia!" exclaimed the girl, "and of course the Colonel is in the café. I am lost. If I should run away now, the Colonel would overtake me in his carriage quickly enough!"

Suddenly at the end of the street she saw a well-known figure. It was Ratier, whom she knew notwithstanding the huge umbrella that shielded him from rain and observation. She knew him by his decided, quick tread.

The poor little girl's heart beat quickly. She watched Ratier go to the café, shut his umbrella and look up at her window. She hastily retreated. She did not wish Ratier to know that she was watching him, but the consciousness of impending peril conquered this first impulse of timidity, and she leaned over the railing, her pretty face covered with blushes and smiles.

Ratier saw her, and with an almost imperceptible sign disappeared within the café.

The sign he made signified clearly, "Write!" But how could she write, and what could she say? She stood, therefore, with her eyes sadly fixed on this café, which had swallowed up her one hope.

"Well, Catherine," said her mother on the threshold of her room, "where are your things?"

The young girl started. Barbe was too utterly furious at seeing that nothing had been done, to wonder what the girl saw from the window to interest her.

Besides, the idea that Catherine could be keeping up any communication with the outside world had never entered her head. She had too much confidence in her own judgment and in the clearness of her perceptions to be suspicious. Her only fear was that Ratier would call, and it was for this reason that she was in such feverish haste to depart.

She went to work herself, therefore. She opened the drawers of the bureau and wardrobe, and thrust a little linen into a trunk. In an hour their preparations were made; more than once in this time had Ratier and Josia given signs of life, and had even succeeded in making Catherine understand that the mysterious carriage was intended for her use. When the trunk was locked, Madame Slavsky bade Miss Amroth send the concierge in search of a carriage.

The poor Irishwoman, pale with dread and sharing all the fears of her young mistress, repeated the order in her presence. Madame Slavsky at that moment was called away, and Katia said to her governess:

"Go quickly," said the young girl, "and try and tell those gentlemen across the street, who are standing by that carriage, that mamma is going to take me away. I will keep mamma from going near the window."

Miss Amroth darted out like an arrow. Her affection for Catherine was great, but her hatred for Madame Slavsky was greater; for her mistress had treated her ill, exacting from her the most menial services, and rarely paying her a penny.

While Miss Amroth was gone, Madame Slavsky discovered that Catherine was still in her morning dress, and that she had made no change in her costume.

"Not ready!" cried her mother: "I see what you are aiming at. You wish that that detestable Ratier, when he calls, shall find you here. But two can play at that game, my dear. Now dress, for I shall not move from here again until you have your hat on."

Catherine dressed as slowly as possible, under the eyes of her irritated mother, who handed her each article of her toilette in succession. Just as she was fastening her hat Miss Amroth appeared and said:

"The carriage is ready."

The concierge went down first, with a trunk on his shoulder; then came Madame Slavsky, pushing her daughter before her; and, finally, Miss Amroth, who, in the haste and confusion, had had no time to ask what was to become of her.

They all reached the foot of the stairs. Miss Amroth had been unable to say one word to Catherine; for Barbe was too near. The door of the carriage stood open. Wraps and bags were on the front seat. The coachman, having arranged the trunk, had resumed his seat. The rain was falling in sheets. Barbe bade her daughter enter the carriage, and took a seat at her side. Miss Amroth, in the rain, began a series of questions, which her Irish accent, and her haste and agitation, rendered anything but lucid. Catherine felt that all was lost, and mentally bade farewell to Ratier, when Josia's voice was heard. He ran

across the street, under the huge umbrella which Catherine recognized as her lover's, and asked to see Madame Slavsky.

"She is in the carriage," answered Miss Amroth, with a sob, and in the same tone with which she might have said, "She is in her coffin."

"Madame Slavsky, how thankful I am that I am not too late! I come from the Colonel with an urgent message—private—confidential—"

Josia's face was inspired with such unusual energy and gayety, that Barbe thought some great event had taken place.

"Tell me quick!" she said, nervously.

"To you alone, madame," answered the secretary. "Before mademoiselle it is impossible—"

With a despairing gesture Madame Slavsky stepped from the carriage with the assistance of Josia's hand. He took her a step or two nearer the house, and sheltered her with his umbrella, which he kept between the carriage and the too confiding Barbe.

"Make haste," she said, "I have not a moment to lose —what is the matter?"

"Ah! madame! The Colonel—excuse me—I have run so fast that I cannot speak—the Colonel bade me say to you—"

Just as the umbrella descended between the door nearest the pavement and Barbe, the opposite door of the carriage was hastily opened by Ratier. He took Catherine by the hand, made her descend, and placed her in the other

carriage, the door of which stood open, and seated himself at her side. They were driven at a steady pace, but not too hurriedly, toward the Elysée; and turned into La Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré just as Madame Slavsky said to the secretary, most impatiently:

"Josia, you are really more foolish than usual. Tell me at once what the Colonel has sent you here for."

Josia became very brave—for the sound of wheels was rapidly fading away in the distance—closed his umbrella, and said:

"I really believe, madame, in my excessive haste that I have forgotten what he said. I will go back to him, however, and in a quarter of an hour—"

"You are an idiot, I do really believe!" cried Madame Slavsky, rudely. And turning her back upon him she hurried to the carriage, and uttered a stifled scream. Katia was not there; and the opposite door was open.

"It is a plot! A preconceived plot!" cried Barbe, pale with rage. "And it is you, sir, who are the one to be punished. Coachman! where is my daughter?"

"I have seen nothing, madame," answered the coachman; and with truth, for all these goings and comings he attributed to the arrangements attendant upon a journey. And besides, the head of his horse was turned in an opposite direction from that taken by the fugitives.

Madame Slavsky took an impartial view of the proceedings. She blamed them one and all—the concierge, and the coachman, the governess, and Josia. The coachman, who was neither of gentle birth nor association, left

his box, and returned her vituperation with such energy, that, notwithstanding the rain, half a dozen persons assembled, and the concierge was obliged to interfere.

Barbe ordered her trunk taken off and wished to keep the carriage, but the coachman, who harbored considerable resentment, drove away, and left her standing, without an umbrella, in the pitiless rain, which was now coming down as if the very skies were opened.

Invoking every possible misfortune on the whole human race, Madame Slavsky turned to go to her apartment in search of an umbrella. But Miss Amroth during the quarrel had disappeared with the key, and a locksmith was sent for. Later, Barbe found her key and her governess at Madame d'Haupelles', where Josia had bidden her take refuge.

For a few moments profound silence reigned in the carriage which bore Catherine away. Utterly bewildered by her sudden deliverance, but confident that all was well done, the young girl sat in quiet content, and Ratier had no desire to disturb her. After having said that he had wished to wring the General's neck, whom he had met on the corner of the street—after having said that but for poor Miss Amroth and her communication, he could not have succeeded in his little plot—the young man felt that he, too, needed a little rest to collect his ideas.

"You do not ask where we are going!" he said, finally.

What did it matter to the young girl, provided it was not to the General? She nevertheless asked:

"To Madame d'Haupelles'?"

"No. Your mother will go there at once. We are on our way to my friends at Montmartre—those whose address I gave you. They are the best people in the world, and you will be perfectly happy with them until the day of our marriage."

Catherine colored, but it was neither with shame nor anger.

"It is with entire willingness, Katia," said Ratier. in a low tone, "that you give your consent?"

"Yes," she answered, timidly.

He longed to kiss the little gloved hand which rested on the edge of the carriage door, but a feeling of delicacy withheld him. The girl had suffered so acutely, her womanly delicacy had been so wounded, that he dared not awaken the memory of these scenes by any caress, however respectful.

"Miss Amroth must be well rewarded," said Katia, suddenly; "for without her I should probably be now on my way to Germany."

"Certainly, and Josia too. Poor Josia! who has lost his valuable position with the Colonel."

"Poor Josia!" repeated Catherine. "Ah! how droll he was with his umbrella!"

"With mine, you mean! I bought it expressly for this occasion. It was the largest the man had."

They laughed like two merry children; and then Katia becoming suddenly very grave, said:

"My mother will never consent to this marriage. What are you going to do?"

"Yes, she will consent. Lay aside forever all anxiety, my child, in regard to this. It is not your affair, nor is it mine. It belongs, in fact, to Madame d'Haupelles."

Madame Féraud, warned by a telegram despatched two hours before, was waiting with anxiety for the *dénoûment* of this interesting romance. Would the young girl, who was coming, be a timid gazelle or a proud and haughty heroine of romance? She was inclined to accept the last as her portrait, inasmuch as to allow herself to be run away with indicated a certain amount of courage.

Great was her astonishment at seeing the slender, graceful girl who stepped lightly from the carriage; and to whom habitual intercourse with society gave, even in this embarrassing position, infinitely more ease of manner than belonged to Madame Féraud. One would have been tempted to believe that it was Katia who offered hospitality, and Madame Féraud who was the recipient.

Jacques entered in another half hour, and was much struck by Catherine's grace and beauty, and still more by her womanly modesty. The grace and the beauty were hers probably from birth, but the modesty was born of her sincere esteem and love for his friend.

While Katia and the little girl became intimate, Ratier took his host and hostess apart and lightly sketched for them the events of the last few days.

"I felt," he said, in conclusion, "that I could rely on you as upon myself. When I asked you to give her an asylum I did not venture to hope that she would ever be

my wife, and I only wished to protect her. I therefore now thank you more warmly than ever. To you two and to Madame d'Haupelles I owe all my happiness."

Jacques, man-like, felt no little anxiety as to the result of this affair. But Louise was perfectly sanguine. Her uneventful, peaceful life left her with a strong interest in the affairs of other people, and to play a part in these events, did they terminate in a drama or a comedy, seemed to her perfectly delightful.

As Ratier went away, Josia arrived. He had taken advantage of Barbe's contention with the coachman to quietly disappear.

"Ah, Josia!" cried Ratier, "we were just praising you, and first I wish to thank you for the adroit manner in which you managed my umbrella—"

"Here it is," interrupted the young man, laying it on the table; "and I am glad enough to get rid of it. I think it weighs at least twenty-five pounds."

"You have done well, friend Josia, to bring it back. That umbrella has served us nobly. Now you will read a little note which mademoiselle will write, and put in the post at the Observatory."

"And why the Observatory?" asked Josia.

"To dissipate all suspicions, innocent youth. We are at Montmartre; consequently the letter should be postmarked the other side of the water, so that she will look for us over there. If madame were very wise, this simple precaution would be useless."

Ratier went into the next room where Catherine was, and soon returned.

"This is the letter," he said; "and I will read it to you:"

"MY DEAR MAMMA.

"I am in safety, among good people. When you will give your consent to my marriage to Monsieur Ratier, and will send Madame d'Haupelles all the necessary papers, you will hear from me again.

"Your affectionate daughter,

"CATHERINE SLAVSKY."

"It is short and sweet, and entirely to the purpose," said Ratier, as he sealed it. "A postage stamp in the corner, and we may feel that we have done our duty, and more than she has a right to expect of us. Now, Josia, take an omnibus—"

"If I should mail it near the Luxembourg," interrupted Josia, timidly, "would it not do as well? I have not breakfasted, and—"

"Agreed. You will breakfast; then take your leisure and get an appetite for dinner. I suppose you realize, my dear young friend, that your time is now your own, for the tie which bound you to Boleslas is forever broken. Come to my rooms later and we will dine together."

Josia left to fulfil his mission, and Ratier hurried to Madame d'Haupelles, while Katia took her seat at the hospitable table of the Férauds.

Barbe's first care when she had succeeded in finding an umbrella, and had thrown aside her wet cloak, was to hasten to the Colonel, who came near having a stroke of apoplexy when he heard of Josia's treachery.

"But we are lost!" he cried. "If Josia is a traitor, we are lost! He knows a thousand things of importance, any one of which would be fatal—"

"That is all nonsense," replied Barbe. "It is not now a question of your being lost. It is Katia, who has disappeared."

"And do you realize, Barbe, what is to become of me the day after to-morrow—all these notes falling due, and I without a penny?"

"You have to-morrow to think about that. But Katia—where am I to look for her? That infamous Ratier—would that I could punish him! What in heaven's name am I to say to the General?"

Having thus interchanged their mutual anxieties, and properly quarrelled with and snubbed each other, this pair of strangely assorted friends separated, and Barbe went to ascertain, if from Madame d'Haupelles she could not procure some information. But the door of her old friend was closed upon her, and she was obliged to return home.

Heaven that day had another grief in store for her. About four o'clock, when she was sitting at her escritoire making an estimate of her available resources, there was a ring at the bell. There was no one to heed it, not even poor Miss Amroth—so unappreciated in her day, and so

vituperated since she had gone over to the camp of the enemy.

Barbe opened it herself, and to her great astonishment she saw Rémisoff. His very existence had almost gone out of her mind. What on earth had he come for? She was in no humor to receive his visit; but of course it was impossible for her to prevent his coming in, particularly as he had an extraordinarily amiable smile upon his lips.

"Madame," said the youth, sitting opposite Barbe, holding his hat in a most irreproachable attitude, "I wish to apologize to you, and have come for that purpose!"

Madame Slavsky looked at him with an expression which signified clearly: "Have you made your escape from a lunatic asylum?" But she waited silently for what was coming.

"I fear," continued Rémisoff, "that I offended Mademoiselle Katia by something I said to her: it was not in earnest, and Ratier made me understand what a mistake I had made—"

"Ratier!" interrupted Madame Slavsky

"Yes, madame; he spoke of my conduct in such moving terms that I really—in short, madame, I came to ask for Mademoiselle Catherine's hand."

This was too much: Barbe covered her face with her hands and burst into sobs.

Believing that excessive joy—for he estimated at its full value the honor of his alliance—had affected the nerves of

the lady, Rémisoff rushed to her side; but she pushed him aside with violence.

"Are you not ashamed," she cried, "to trifle with—"

But seeing by Rémisoff's face that there was no intention of trifling, Madame Slavsky snatched at the straw that was held out to her. She gasped, exerted all her self-control, and then said, quietly:

"You are in earnest?"

"Most assuredly, madame. I, of course, understand, after what Mademoiselle Katia has told you, that you will not easily pardon me; but I trust that you will not be too severe—"

His smile finished the phrase which mentally was "You cannot long be severe with a man as rich and altogether as *comme il faut* as myself."

"I will consult my daughter," said Barbe, rising. Any one would have supposed that Katia was in the next room.

"How soon may I hope for an answer?"

"In a few days."

"Oh! madame! A few hours rather."

"In two days, then," said Barbe, firmly.

"If you would allow me to plead my own cause with mademoiselle—"

"I repeat, sir, that it is impossible. Besides, just now, my daughter is out with her governess. I am entirely alone."

Rémisoff glanced round the room, the disorder of which struck him for the first time.

"You seem to be preparing for a journey."

"We were thinking of it; but your proposition modifies my plans; in two days from now I shall be better able to give you a reply."

Rémisoff allowed himself to be thus dismissed, while Barbe, alone once more, walked up and down the room, paying little heed to the chairs which she swept down in her path.

When Madame Slavsky was weary with this amusement, she threw herself in one of the large fauteuils and relapsed into profound meditation. But it was little use to her to think. Heaven granted her no favorable inspiration, and she finished by the conviction that she could do nothing but wait.

She waited therefore, and after a couple of hours was rewarded by hearing the door bell. She was fearful that her visitor was General Thomine, and she listened for a moment before opening. Instead of the labored breathing of old Thomine, after climbing two flights of stairs, she caught the sound of a little dry cough and a rustle of silk.

"It is not Katia," said Barbe to herself; "she wore a woollen dress. But it is certainly a woman."

She opened the door, and to her utter astonishment found herself face to face with Madame d'Haupelles.

The two women did not exchange one single word until the visitor was seated in the salon. It was not a time for mere ceremony, and Barbe made no attempt to utter the worldly commonplaces which pass current in good society. Neither cared to look the other in the face:

Madame Slavsky from embarrassment; Madame d'Haupelles from delicacy—possibly from disgust.

"Will you tell me where my daughter is?" asked Barbe at last.

"Will you tell me," returned Madame d'Haupelles, "why you wished to depart this morning without notifying me, and thus breaking your promise?"

"I never promised to remain in Paris," answered Madame Slavsky, by degrees regaining her natural self-possession—or we should rather call it her native impudence, refined by civilization.

"Granted; but you promised me and I paid you for the consent of Catherine's father, and you delivered to me a perfectly valueless document, which had not the most remote connection with your daughter or her marriage. You must think me very simple to suppose that the document was not translated into French this morning before ten o'clock."

"Who translated it?" asked Barbe, somewhat disturbed.

"A translator at the Russian Embassy."

Madame Slavsky turned pale; that they were concerning themselves with her affairs at the Embassy was not by any means agreeable to her.

"You are certainly in a very awkward position," resumed Madame d'Haupelles. "Give me Monsieur Slavsky's consent, and do it speedily and with a good grace. This is my disinterested advice to you."

"And why, pray?"

Madame d'Haupelles rose and walked close to her friend's chair.

"Because, if you refuse, a charge of obtaining money under false pretences will be made against you. I gave you five thousand francs for a document for which you have substituted another. This is a grave offence—extremely grave; and the penalty is very severe."

Barbe reflected for a moment.

"I will not allow my daughter to marry Monsieur Ratier."

"Because she loves him?"

"Because I detest him."

"But that is not a satisfactory reason."

"I have a better alliance in view."

"General Thomine, I presume."

Barbe looked her ex-friend and ally fair in the face.

"Who told you that?"

"Never mind; I know it."

"Very well. What objection do you make?"

"The very best: the General is a worn-out débauché. But there is even a stronger one than that: Katia loves Ratier."

Madame Slavsky shrugged her shoulders.

"I am not speaking of Thomine," she said. "Rémisoff is the man I meant."

Madame d'Haupelles knew of Rémisoff, of course. She said, however:

"It is of little consequence whom you mean, since your daughter loves, and means to marry Monsieur Ratier.

Come, give me the paper I want. I have wasted too much time here already."

"No," said Barbe, "I will not consent to this marriage."

"As you please," said Madame d'Haupelles, coldly. "I am going to the Embassy."

And she turned toward the door. Barbe saw that she must yield.

"I am the most unfortunate of women!" she exclaimed. "Three marriages are proposed to me for my daughter, and I am compelled to select out of these three, the one which is the least desirable in every point of view. Upon my word! I doubt if a mother was ever before treated in a similar way. I am overwhelmed by financial embarrassments; and this is the time taken by my enemies to deprive me of all my resources."

Madame d'Haupelles stood with her hand upon the door.

"Monsieur Ratier commissioned me to say to you that the very moment he received from you your consent, in due form, to his marriage with your daughter, that he should take pleasure in putting at your disposal the sum of ten thousand francs, which he had laid aside for some extraordinary emergency. But, as you refuse—"

Barbe opened her desk, took out a paper, this time written in French, drawn up in regular form, and signed and sealed, leaving in blank the name of Catherine's husband.

Madame d'Haupelles read this paper, assuring herself that this time it was all right.

"And now," said Barbe, "when shall I have the money?"

"If bills are sent to Monsieur Ratier to-morrow, to the amount of ten thousand francs, he will pay them."

Barbe frowned. She had expected to receive "cash down." The payment of debts, which had never disturbed her conscience, was most unsatisfactory, and was much like the whiff from a restaurant kitchen to the nostrils of a starving man. But she could say nothing; she thought enough, however.

"Good heavens!" she said to herself, "how stupid these people are, with their pretensions to order and excessive honesty!"

Aloud she said:

"It is to be hoped that Katia will now condescend to return to me."

"Do not rely upon that," answered Madame d'Haupelles. "She is very well where she is, and where she will remain."

"Where is she?"

"You will know the day of her marriage. Until then be satisfied to know that she is with the kindest of people, acquiring some ideas of the duties of a good mother and loving wife; duties of which, up to this time, she has known absolutely nothing."

"You are very cruel," murmured Barbe, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I do not agree with you," replied Madame d'Haupelles. "But give me all the papers, for the banns are to be published at once."

"Already! We have hardly had time to think of it."

"Why delay in this way, Barbe? This consent, as you know, is comparatively useless without the other papers. Give them to me, or I must repeat my threat of going to the Embassy."

Barbe reluctantly gave her the package, and Madame d'Haupelles turned to leave. At the last moment her heart was moved to compassion for this woman, whose pride was so cruelly punished.

"You can see your child at my house," she said.

"Many thanks! I prefer, since she is not allowed to come back to me, not to see her until I meet her at the church. The rôle which you offer me is hardly compatible with my dignity as a mother."

Draped in this maternal dignity, Madame Slavsky opened the door for Madame d'Haupelles, and then returned to the melancholy solitude of her salon.

What an utter ruin of all her hopes! What a bitter disappointment! In search of consolation, she went to find the Colonel.

Madame d'Haupelles repaired at once to Montmartre to carry her good news. As she entered the modest dwelling of the Férauds, she was struck by the tableau which met her eyes.

Seated near a table in the dining-room, which was filled with the light of the setting sun, with the glossy braids of her pretty hair all disturbed by a romp in the garden with the little girl, Katia applied herself with her whole heart and soul to mending a large stocking. The task was an

arduous one apparently, for she was quite red, and every little while she would stop and draw a long sigh.

The child, delighted with her new friend, had finally fallen asleep on a low footstool, while her fair head and blonde curls lay on Catherine's lap. Madame Féraud, somewhat intimidated by the visit of a grande dame like Madame d'Haupelles, had at first received her in the salon, but could not refrain from showing her the pretty picture we have described. Catherine, in some confusion, wished to rise, but the child objected to being disturbed, and therefore, all smiles and blushes, the young girl only lifted her face to meet the kind caress of her friend.

"What are you doing?" asked Madame d'Haupelles, when her eyes fell on Catherine's needle-work.

"I am learning to mend stockings, madame."

"I wished her to try those of my little girl first," said Madame Féraud, smiling; "but she refused, and insisted on taking a pair of my husband's."

"You are wise, my child," said the lady. "Cultivate all domestic virtues. You are in a good school. I have just told your mother so; and she authorizes you to remain here for the present. Your marriage may take place now, almost immediately; for I bring with me all the necessary papers. In twelve days, therefore—"

"Twelve days!" Twelve days were but a short time; but she was in such deadly terror of falling into the hands she dreaded, that she wished it was a less time.

Madame d'Haupelles left her, completely reassured as to her future. Without doubt, this extraordinary passion

for mending and housekeeping would not last; but the intentions were good, at all events.

Ratier came in the evening, and found Féraud in the act of bravely swallowing a dish concocted by Katia, from some cook-book. The good news she imparted to him rendered him so utterly unmanageable, that at eleven Féraud and his wife sent him away, saying that they had laughed so much that they were utterly worn out.

On his way home, he passed a *guinguette*—such as one finds now-a-days only rarely in Paris. A wedding was being celebrated—that of a washwoman. The garden was illuminated by lanterns. Some persons were singing; others drinking Eau de Seltz, with raspberry syrup. The bride was standing in a swing which one of the groomsmen was pushing; her white dress and wreath of orange flowers disappeared each time she went up among the foliage of a superb horse-chestnut, and brought down a shower of pink and white blossoms. The husband, with an orange blossom in his button-hole, pale and anxious, was discussing some point with two refractory coachmen outside. Ratier at once thought of the *Chapeau de paille d'Italie.*

"Thus shall I be," he said to himself, parodying Gavarni's celebrated witticism, "in little more than a week! By the way—I have an Idea. I will have such a wedding as no one ever saw before."

He kept his word. Thanks to Madame d'Haupelles, in twelve days he led Katia, first before the Mayor, and then to the church, where they found Barbe, the Colonel,

and Josia. Rémisoff also appeared, more sulky than ever; but this time with more reason than usual; for Catherine was never so lovely.

The breakfast took place in a quiet restaurant, where Ratier, for a wonder, was unknown, and which he had selected for that very reason. Everything was arranged in the best possible taste. The bridal pair were to leave for Italy that night at half-past eight. How were they to get rid of the day? Madame Slavsky was dignified and severe; no suggestion could be obtained from her. The Colonel, too, was reproachful and morose, and would not condescend to give any advice.

"If no one objects," said the young husband, "I propose that we lay aside all our gorgeousness; and that we attire ourselves like simple, every-day folk; and then I think we shall all be more comfortable."

No one objecting, Madame Féraud and the bride retired to change their toilette; Katia soon reappearing in the simplest possible travelling dress, chosen by Madame d'Haupelles' good taste.

"And now," said Ratier, "we will go to the Bois and look at the wedding processions. They cannot laugh at ours, but we can amuse ourselves as long as we please at their expense."

Their party was very small, for Barbe and the Colonel withdrew—one on the pretext of a headache, and the other of business. Ratier took Josia aside, as they were starting, and gave him a secret order.

"What mischief are you concocting?" cried Louise

Féraud, whose warm heart had taken her husband's friend into favor.

"Time will show," answered Ratier, as they took their seats.

The two carriages rolled off, and soon reached the Bois, which was radiant with sunshine of a glorious summer's day.

The party established themselves in a spot where everybody passed them.

In a quarter of an hour Josia appeared again.

"How many?" asked Ratier.

"Nineteen," answered the ex-secretary, for he had broken loose from his slavery to Boleslas, which was neither honorable nor lucrative; and Madame d'Haupelles had found him a government position, with a salary of three thousand francs and promise of promotion. Never had the poor fellow dreamed of such good fortune; and he promised himself to save something out of his salary, and go and hear his friend *il Signor Ratiero* sing Gli-Ughennotti in Italian opera at La Scala.

"Look! There go our carriages!" said Katia, suddenly recognizing the two Berlins in which they had driven out from Paris. "Why are they going up and down in this way, with no one in them?"

"My dear, you see now the beginning of our wedding procession," answered Ratier, majestically, as he seated himself to look on.

In the second Berlin was displayed the open umbrella which had rescued Catherine and given her to her lover.

"What is that?" she asked.

"Our standard, my love. It has been in the thick of the fight, and is entitled to all distinction."

He counted a succession of carriages which drove by. Every coachman wore a white ribbon in his button-hole; every carriage was empty, and there were nineteen in all.

"What a brilliant idea," said Ratier, "to send around this procession of empty carriages in that way!"

For two hours, all Paris who was at the Bois saw nineteen empty carriages parade the roads, escorting this widespread umbrella. The most extraordinary speculations were indulged in. They talked of an Englishman who had drawn a prize in a lottery; of an American manufacturer of umbrellas; but no one, among all those who laughed so heartily, suspected that it was Ratier's wedding procession.

The next morning the papers were full of it; and until they reached Florence, Ratier did not cease to hear the description of this astonishing cavalcade.

The Colonel was busily employed with the speculation suggested by Ratier some time previous—that of the kindling-wood—which, however, did not meet with any very marked success.

Miss Amroth has found a situation in a family where they actually pay her wages; and she is even becoming accustomed to the anomaly!

Madame Slavsky mentally made a little calculation after the following fashion: "Monte Carlo is not far from

Florence. Saxon closed, there is nothing left but Monte Carlo; consequently it will be an easy thing to go occasionally, and borrow money from Catherine." Had not her income been reduced, and was not her daughter deeply responsible for this loss?

As to Ratier and his young wife, their home was a singular mixture of music-books and darning-cotton; but they love each other devotedly, and Ratier continues to be looked upon as the Tenor of all others, and the one who comes nearer Duprez.

THE END.

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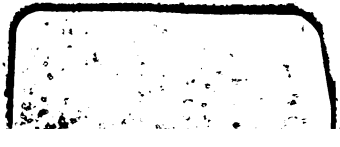
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